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CONTENTS

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JEWISH AND CHRISTIAN ASTROLOGY IN LATE ANTIQUITY
— A NEW APPROACH[1]

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There is no Jewish archisynagogus, no Samaritan, no Christian presbyter
who is not an astrologer, a soothsayer, or an anointer.[2]

Summary and Introduction

In late antiquity astrology held a key position among the accepted and well-reputed
sciences. As *ars mathematica* closely connected with astronomy, it made its way into
the highest political and philosophical orders of the Roman Empire and became the
standard model of interpreting past, present, and future events. Although this is widely
acknowledged by modern historians, most scholars assume that the application of
astrological theories is limited to the 'pagan mind,' whereas Jewish and Christian
theology is characterized by a harsh refutation of astrology's implications.

As can easily be shown, this assumption is not the result of careful examination
of the documentary evidence but of a preconceived and misleading opinion about the
basic ideas of astrology, which led to an astonishing disregard of Jewish and Christian
evidence for astrological concerns. This evidence has been either played down —
if not neglected entirely — or labeled 'heretic,' thus prolonging the polemics of the
'church fathers' right into modernity.

After having reviewed the biases of previous research into monotheistic astrology
and its crucial methodological problems, I shall propose a different approach. Astrol-
ogy has to be seen as a certain way of interpreting reality. In this regard it is the very
backbone of esoteric tradition. I shall sketch the different discourses reflected in some
late antiquity's Jewish and Christian documents. It will be shown that the astrologi-
cal worldview of planetary and zodiacal correspondences was common to most of the
sources. Examples will be presented for illustrating different adoptions of this atti-
tude, namely the discourse of cult theology, the magical and mystical application of

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[1] The following is a summary of my Ph.D. thesis' results (1999). Each line of
arguments presented here is discussed in that study in great detail, so that I shall
give special references to it only occasionally. Special thanks go to Barbara Thériault,
Erfurt, who improved my English.

[2] A saying of Hadrian, reported in *Hist. Aug.* Firmus 8.3; cf. also Apuleius,
Apol. 90 and Lucian, *Alex.* 32.13.

astrological knowledge, the debates concerning volition and determinism, and, finally, the use of astrology for political and religious legitimization.

1.   Research into Monotheistic Astrology: a Critique

Ancient astrology has been studied by a lot of famous scholars over the last century.[3] In the course of time Babylonian and Greek astrology has been described in detail, whereas Jewish and Christian contributions to and adoptions of that science — if recognized at all — have been played down. One gains the impression that Jews and Christians simply did not take notice of what was going on around them. David Flusser put this common notion directly: "The Jewish people in Palestine and elsewhere had become completely immune to the attractions of the paganism against which the prophets [had spoken]."[4] And Gundel resumes regarding the Christians: "Right from the beginning Christianity refuted astrology's axioms and radically fought against them."[5] Considering the huge amount of Jewish and Christian astrologoumena dating from late antiquity these statements are, at least, questionable.

Among the biases of theologians and those of historians of religion the following three are prevailing:

(1) Belief in astrology leads necessarily to polytheism because the planets are in a way materialized forms of a deity. At times people even considered stars and gods being identical.

(2) Astrology implies a tendency to worship astral entities and thus usually establishes a star cult. This is obviously incompatible with monotheistic theology. As everyone knows, the Babylonians worshipped their astral deities with sacrifices. This behavior was

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[3] Still unsurpassed is Bouché-Leclercq's opus of 1899. Of special value are the studies of Cramer (1954), Gundel (1966), van der Waerden (1968), and — more recently — Barton (1994 & 1995). A summary of ancient astrology's development is given in von Stuckrad 1996: 17-85.

[4] Quoted from Charlesworth 1987: 945 no. 65.

[5] Gundel 1966: 332. If not noted otherwise, all foreign quotations are translated by the author.

consequently and radically refuted by the biblical prophets, so that later compromises were made impossible.

(3) Astrology is strongly connected with fatalism and deterministic worldviews. Given that pious and rightful behavior is dependent on free will and that prayer seems worthless in a deterministic universe, astrology must be considered inconsistent with Judaism and Christianity. Ergo: if astrology comes into play, there will be no room for Jewish or Christian beliefs. This notion seems exaggerated, but is continuously proposed, even by leading scholars. Talking for many others, M.P. Nilsson, a great scholar of ancient religions, may be quoted here: "The causal linkage excludes every arbitrary supernatural intervention into world's history, so that astrology consequently had to establish atheism; it did so, as is told about the emperor Tiberius, himself a convinced adherent of astrology."[6]

These usually undoubted theological axioms have important implications. First of all, documents not fitting into the narrow perspective of modern scholarship have simply been ignored. The fact that it took 35 years from the preliminary publication of the Qumran horoscope 4Q186 by J.T. Milik in 1957 and its new presentation to a wider public by R. Eisenman and M. Wise in 1992 — still lacking any scholarly responsibility — is a telling example. The Greek magical papyri are another one. But in some cases the astrological connotations were too strong to be ignored entirely, e.g. the pavements of the Palestinian synagogues with their zodiacal depiction or — on the Christian side — the elaborated astrological ingredients within Gnostic writings. In these cases scholars tend to claim that those developments were only able to emerge outside 'orthodox' or 'normative' Judaism and Christianity. With regard to astrology the same process of centralization has taken place, as in the case of Christian mythmaking, profoundly analyzed by Burton L. Mack. [7] Jonathan Z. Smith laid further emphasis on the methodological difficulties still determinable within theological historiography:

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[6] Nilsson 1974: 278.

[7] Mack 1995, see especially pp. 7-11.

> As in the archaic locative ideology, the centre has been protected, the periphery
> seen as threatening, and relative difference perceived as absolute 'other.' The
> centre, the fabled Pauline seizure by the 'Christ-event' or some other construction
> of an originary moment, has been declared, *a priori*, to be unique, to be
> *sui generis*, and hence, by definition, incomparable. The periphery, whether
> understood temporally to precede or follow the Pauline moment, or, in spatial
> terms, to surround it, is to be subjected to procedures of therapeutic comparison.
> This is exorcism or purgation, not scholarship.[8]

The modulations of this criticism have been intensively discussed in
the humanities during the last two decades,[9] but its implications have
only rarely been put into practice. In other words: although that criti-
cism is widely accepted theoretically, a lot of scholars shrink from the
consequences that lead to a new position regarding the possibility of
telling a monolinear history. But one has to take them seriously. Gen-
eral definitions of 'Judaism,' 'Christianity,' or 'astrology' have to be
avoided from the outset. They are the result of a theological project of
legitimization carried out in ancient and early modern times. In con-
trast to this intention, it cannot be the goal of an academic examina-
tion to find out *the* position of ancient Jews and Christians towards
astrology. Acknowledging the perspectives' plurality and their contin-
gent backgrounds, my analysis focuses on the *social and religious dis-
courses*. Single positions have to be examined for their own sake and,
simultaneously, *embedded* in the discussions of the time.

Thus, the following questions are to be answered: which discourses
characterize the background of the sources under examination? Which
social, political, and religious contexts have to be taken into consider-
ation? What were the means to gain consensus about the debates of the

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[8] Smith 1990: 143.

[9] Among the most illuminating contributions to this debate are Berger & Luck-
mann 1966; White 1973 & 1978; Koselleck 1995; Müller & Rüsen 1997. The present
author's methodology is deeply influenced by those scholars. Furthermore, the phi-
losophy of Richard Rorty was of high relevance for me in establishing a *pragmatic
Religionswissenschaft*, cf. Rorty 1979 & 1989 and my methodological assumptions in
von Stuckrad 1999, ch. II.

time within Jewish and Christian monotheism? What differences are determinable, and how are they to be explained?

2. Astrology and the Esoteric Doctrine of Correspondences

In the following I shall approach astrology from a different point of departure. Leaving the apologetic theological projections behind I do not consider astrology to be a superstition or apostasy. Furthermore, it is not *a priori* connected with determinism or star cult, though both phenomena are part of antiquity's debates. To begin with, astrology is an integral component of ancient culture and had an important impact on Western *Geistesgeschichte*. This holds notably true for the history of esotericism. Emerging from an hermetic discourse astrology can be regarded as *esoteric thinking's central discipline*. It stands in the center of alchemy and magic and exerted a strong influence on Western culture since Renaissance times.[10]

In a number of articles and books Antoine Faivre argued that esotericism is not a secret religion but a specific *worldview*. As is well known, he distinguishes six characteristic 'forms of thought,' the first four being considered as intrinsic to the definition of esotericism, the last two as relative or non-intrinsic.[11] As far as astrology is concerned, the first characteristic — the doctrine of correspondences — is of crucial importance. It is the very backbone of astrological thinking and can be called *vertical*.[12] Instead of assuming a causal and mechanistic influence of the stars astrologers try to establish analogies and symmetric correspondences between the planetary zone and the earth — hermeticism's famous 'as above, so below.' Hence, a denotation of astrology

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[10] The influence of Jewish specialists on the history of alchemy was recently spelled out by Patai 1994. Alchemy is a similar case to astrology, and Patai breaks new ground for future scholarship.

[11] The intrinsic characteristics are: Correspondences, living nature, imagination and mediations, experience of transmutation. The relative characteristics are: The praxis of concordance and transmission. Cf. Faivre 1994: 10-15; Hanegraaff 1995: 111f and 1996: 396-401.

[12] Cf. von Stuckrad 1999a. As an influential contribution to the contemporary (at least the popular) esoteric self description cf. Dethlefsen 1979, esp. ch. I.

would read as follows: Astrology is a concept of interpretation describing the *quality* of a given time, i.e. the essence of simultaneously and synchronically occurring events which are connected to inherent symbols and meaning. The measuring instrument for this purpose are the zodiac and the stars' movements.

The crucial point is that astrology is a discipline reckoning with the *meaning* of celestial instances. It strives to accurately read the 'signs of the time.' The discussions about this accuracy are of high importance for ancient people — including Jews and Christians. Indeed, people of the monotheistic creed participated in the astrological discourses to an astonishing degree. Astrological semantics, as I call them, play a significant role within most of Jewish and Christian theologies, ranging from a simple astral symbolism — that is not to be called astrological — to highly elaborated systems which show a distinctive theological hand.

3.   Diversified Sources and Methodological Implications

From ancient times there has survived an abundance of astrologoumena of Jewish and Christian provenance. The sources, stemming from the second century BCE to the eighth century CE, show a variety of attempts to cope with astrology's challenges. Before analyzing the different contributions Jews and Christians made to the debates of the time, I shall give a short overview of the documents under examination. This is important because I do not restrict my analysis to the (later) canonized sources which are the result of what Jonathan Z. Smith calls purgation. For me, every source showing a Jewish or Christian provenance is of equal relevance. Indeed, the non-canonical documents were much more read in those days. What is at stake here is not the question of who was right about astrology or who 'won' the 'battle against the astrologers' superstition,' but how people reacted to the commonly accepted *ars mathematica*, whether by adaptation, transformation, or refutation.

Beginning with the Jewish documents of the so-called intertesta-mental time[13] the Qumran scriptures prove to be of extraordinary value. They depict the priestly discourses of the Second Temple period and show a considerable interest in astrological semantics, even in horoscopic divination. Of the same period are the difficult Enochic literature, the Book of Jubilees, and the vast testamental documents, among which the Testament of Solomon is of special interest. Some minor texts, usually neglected, are also worth mentioning, such as the Treatise of Shem or the Oracula Sibyllina's Jewish insertions. Another genre is marked by the philosophical reflections of the historians, Artapanos, Aristobulos, and, of course, Philo of Alexandria and Josephus Flavius. Later, the different rabbinical documents come into play and show a vivid discussion about astrological implications. Furthermore, from the third to eighth centuries, the Hekhalot literature and the magical bowls from Mesopotamia, with their astrological connotations, are to be considered.

On the Christian side I include both the canonical and non-canonical sources. The former contributed a great deal to the myth of Christian innocence in astrological matters, whereas the latter — especially the huge amount of Gnostic documents — render the impression that a deep Christian contact existed with the star science. This can easily be shown with regard to the Nag Hammadi texts and the teachings of Marcos, Theodotus, and Bardaisan. Those documents contrast with the refutations of centrist Christianity's most famous apologetics, Tertullian, Origen, Augustine, and all the others plagiarizing them. Of crucial importance, then, is the significant Manichaean contribution to monotheistic astrological discourses. Evolving from a Judaeo-Christian apocalypticism centered around the prophet Elchasai and similar Baptist groups, Mani established a full blown astrological system of his own.

In view of these sources' strong diversity a methodological problem arises. As mentioned above, it cannot be the goal of an academic

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[13] The role of astrology within the biblical context falls beyond the scope of this article. For that cf. von Stuckrad 1996: 87-105.

examination to 'find out' the general or even consensual monotheistic position towards astrology. Nor is it my intention to 'detect' a linear development from refutation to adoption, from superstition to enlightenment, or vice versa. Those 'developments' are mere inventions of scholarly *emplotment*.[14] On the other hand, the ancient authors did not write 'in empty space.' They were involved in a twofold discourse — firstly, in their religion's tradition, and, secondly, in their contemporary social, political, scientific, and religious negotiations. Hence, the analysis has to keep in mind the possible overlapping of different discourses, regardless of religions' boundaries.

In order to do so, the following presentation has a systematic, abstract arrangement. Transgressing the perspective of single case studies I shall focus on how Jews and Christians reacted to astrological discussions of the time. Fortunately, the Babylonian and Greek astrological skills have been intensively studied, so that we can recur to the (popular) *vulgata* as well as the academic branches of the *ars mathematica* as kind of *tertium comparationis*. In the second century CE Ptolemy collected the ancient tradition and set a new standard for elaborated astrological knowledge.[15] This standard interpretation of time's quality was adopted by well-educated Jews and Christians whereas less educated people clung to traditional contentions.

My systematic approach attempts to give a typology of ancient discourses. To put it on other words, I describe a meta-structure of astrological semantics within monotheistic perspectives. Those *macro-*

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[14] Hayden White introduced this expression and distinguished it from *argument* and *ideological implication*. All three are usual means to give an academic treatise a pretence of explanation, cf. White 1973.

[15] The canonical status of the *Tetrabiblos* has remained unbroken until our days. But one should not forget the highly developed astrology of Manilius (1st century CE), Vettius Valens (2nd century CE), and Firmicus Maternus (4th century CE); cf. von Stuckrad 1996: 79-85 and the literature mentioned above (n. 3). In addition, the common astrological debates can be reconstructed through the huge collection entitled *Catalogus codicum astrologorum graecorum* (12 vols.), ed. by F. Cumont & F.J. Boll, Brussels 1898-1953 (*CCAG*).

structures mirror the essence of quite different documents and have to be adjusted when applied to certain cases or micro-structures.

4. Astrological Semantics in Monotheistic Perspectives

As has been argued above, the *doctrine of correspondences* lies at the bottom of any astrological argumentation. In late antiquity it was never disputed that the heavenly realms mirror — in a secret or obvious way — mundane events. This notion was so common that it is difficult to find a document which does *not* make use of it. It is visible in the stoic concept of *sympathy* and *heimarmenê* as well as in the platonists' description of the world as a living creature with every part connected to one another or to its transcendent idea. In Roman Egypt Platonism was molded with older priestly traditions and brought forth the esoteric doctrines of the *Corpus Hermeticum*.[16]

Thus, the disputes did not touch upon the notion of correspondences but raised the question of how those correspondences were to be explained. Are the heavenly signs simply accompanying the mundane events — the stars as *sêmeia* — or are they responsible for them — the stars as *poiêtikoi*? And if there is a sympathetic correspondence between celestial sphere and earth, does this necessarily imply a deterministic or fatalistic influence? I shall return to these central questions later. At this point, I only call to mind the position of Origen (c. 185-255 CE), as everyone knows one of astrology's harshest critics. In his almost canonical commentary on Gen. 1:14 he explains that the movements of the stars are to be regarded as a kind of writing by God's hand in the sky. It reveals the divine mysteries to the heavenly powers. Some people may gain (at least inaccurate) insight

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[16] I am aware of the fact that the hermetic treatises show a strong Christian influence, and possibly are the result of a neo-platonist splitting into philosophers (Plotin) and Christians (Nag Hammadi) during the second or third century CE. But in my opinion the Egyptian matrix of hermeticism originating in Ptolemaic times cannot be doubted. On this point I agree with Cumont 1937 and Lindsay 1971. Cf. also Fowden 1986.

into those secrets.[17] Thus, even anti-astrological arguments make use of astrological semantics.[18] This is not due to a naïve misunderstanding of astrology's implications, as some scholars argue, but to an attempt to establish a monotheistically acceptable astrology.[19]

In the following pages it will be shown that this struggle for monotheistic astrology is a characteristic feature of Jewish and Christian discussions. To be sure, the doctrine of correspondences, as well as the concept of heimarmene, does not necessarily lead to astrology, it is instead astrology's *conditio sine qua non.* I shall now turn to the concrete modulations of this basic notion.

4.1. The Discourse of Cult Theology

In Second Temple times cult theology marked the most relevant feature of Jewish thinking. This is not only true for priestly groups but — through the accurate laws of temple duties — for each group relating to the sanctuary.[20] The cultic order was considered a binding revelation mirroring the cosmic order established by God. This fact cannot be overestimated when one analyzes the history of post-exilic Judaism. It is the cultic thinking that serves as background for the harsh conflicts between Jewish groups about calendars, calculations, and liturgical questions. The right interpretation of God's revealed order became the key topic for Second Temple discourses.

Thanks to the discovery of the Dead Sea scrolls, we are now able to gain insight into the peculiar, yet highly interesting, implications

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[17] Eusebius *Praeparatio Evangelica* 6.11; *Philocalia* 23.1-21; cf. also *CCAG* 9.2, 112, 11ff. The enormous influence of Origen's commentary is described by Riedinger 1956: 177-182. Cf. also Amand 1945: 307-318.

[18] Tamsyn Barton correctly says that "Origen thus concedes a good deal to astrology. He says that the stars offer information about a fixed future from beginning to end, and that in some cases they are part of the medium by which fate is played out" (1995: 75). It is exactly the doctrine of correspondences which goes undisputed in Origen's argument.

[19] In the words of John North: "Origen [...] tried desperately to purge astrology of fatalism" (1994: 123).

[20] Cf. Levine 1974; Haran 1978; Milgrom 1983.

of cultic thinking within the Zadokite perspective of the Qumran priests. The Qumran collection of biblical texts reveal a significant interest in chronographic or cultic material relevant to priestly matters and theological historiography.[21] Special emphasis was laid on the connection between the priestly cult on earth — taking place in the ideal Jerusalem — and the heavenly cult, performed by the different classes of angels. In a series of texts the isomorphic resemblance reached a degree that makes it difficult to distinguish between priests and angels, or, generally speaking, the levels of holiness. Because the present article solely deals with astrological matters, I restrict myself to the famous *Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice* (*Shirê 'Olat ha-Shabbat*). After having shown the doctrine of correspondences' cultic relevance, I shall argue that the specific astrologoumena found at Qumran are not a kind of foreign body in the *yachad* but a consequent result of priestly discourses.

The Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice are a liturgical description of the 13 Sabbaths included in one quarter of a year.[22] The holy angelic classes perform therein the heavenly cult, "because He esta]blished them to be His hol[iest servants in the Ho]ly of Holies" (4Q400 frg. 1 col. I, 10). In fragment 2 it is recalled how the angels praise the might of His kingdom "according to their knowledge" and recite the mysterious psalms. They praise the glorious design of God's cosmos, together with the firmament, the girders and walls of His holy construction (4Q403 frg. 1 col. I, 42-44 [=4QShirShabb^d]). The angels settling in the "firmament of purity" represent God's own perfection. Thus, the *planetary angels* are depicted in a very positive manner.[23] Likewise, on the twelfth Sabbath, "the cherubim praise from above the firmament the building of the Merkabah throne, and they cheer the majesty of light's firmament from underneath the seat of His glory" (4Q405 col. XX, 8-9). In line 12 of this fragment the angels' "turning of their paths" are mentioned, "when they rise, they rise in a wonderful

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[21] Cf. Maier 1995, vol. 3: 13.

[22] Edition by Carol Newsom (1985). Cf. also Maier 1990.

[23] Cf. Mach 1992: 173-184.

way." This probably refers to the planets' turning points that were of prominent importance for Babylonian astronomical calculations.

The priests of the temple in Jerusalem — or their opponents at Qumran[24] — did exactly what the angels prefigured in the firmament of glory. Furthermore, the resemblance between heaven and earth was applied to the very appearance of the temple. The curtain veiling the Holy of Holies, it is said, was decorated with "appearances of the living God," with "figures of the divine angels," and so on (4Q405 col. XVI frg. 14 and 15 col. I). Priestly liturgy was careful to describe the holy ornaments in more detail but it can be assumed that, at this point, we come across the same tradition as in Josephus' and Philo's description of the Jerusalem temple. Philo of Alexandria can be read as a direct follower of the Qumranic discourse translating the latter into a philosophical speech. What is more, the *Songs* from the Dead Sea resemble platonic visions to an astonishing degree so that it was easy to transform them into another context.

Philo explicitly made use of the priestly cultic tradition. In *Spec. Leg.* 1.66ff and *Mos.* 2.67ff he explains the curtain in front of the Holy of Holies and the highpriest's garment in a 'vertical' manner. The priest's breastplate (*logeion* or *peristêtion*) was ornamented with twelve precious stones. It was "shaped after the original of the zodiac that consists of twelve pictures and represents the turning of the four seasons" (*Spec. Leg.* 1.87). Thus, the cosmic harmony rang through the temple and "joined the great cosmic worship wherein all creation manifested and worshipped the Creator."[25] In *Mos.* 2.133-135 this is put explicitly:

> Symbols of the zodiac are the twelve stones upon his chest arranged in four rows of three stones in each row, while the breastplate (*logeion*) as a whole represents

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[24] There are strong reasons to assume that the *Songs* are not a peculiar Qumranic invention but form part of a much older priestly ligurgy stemming from post-exilic times.

[25] Goodenough 1953-68, vol. 8: 209f. Goodenough's opus is an important contribution to the scholarly research, although his notion of Philo being the leader of a mystical Jewish group is far from reasonable; cf. von Stuckrad 1996: 179-187.

that Principle [i.e., from the context, the logos] which holds together and rules all things. For it was necessary that he who was consecrated to the Father of the world should have that Father's Son who is perfect in virtue to plead his cause that his sins might be remembered no more and good gifts be showered in abundance. Yet perhaps it is also to teach in advance one who would worship God that even though he may be unable to make himself worthy of the Creator of the cosmos, he yet ought to try increasingly to be worthy of the cosmos. As he puts on his imitation (symbol) he ought straightway to become one who bears in his mind the original pattern, so that he is in a sense transformed from being a man into the nature of the cosmos, and becomes, if one may say so (and indeed one must say nothing false about the truth), himself a little cosmos.[26]

The temple's cosmic symbolism was also known to Josephus Flavius. It was introduced by the historian in a number of versions. The cultic symbolism could easily be turned into an astrological one: "The seven lamps that were branched off the menorah indicated the planets and the breads lying on the table indicated the zodiac and the year."[27] (*BJ* 5.217-218). Hence, Smelik is absolutely right when he observes that "[t]he representation of the luminaries by the menorah lamps, in the wake of Zechariah's fifth vision and Mesopotamian astronomy, was current in the days of Philo and Josephus."[28]

The vertical connection between heaven and earth, angelic cult, and temple liturgy, ubiquitous in late Second Temple times, is in itself not identical with astrological doctrines. But, as has been argued above, it opens the door to them. From cultic theology it is but one step into astrological semantics. This step can easily be traced in the Dead Sea Scrolls where the pious Jews from Qumran did not shrink from astrological divination. They not only tried to find out the disposition of new members by means of horoscopic analysis, but also used the common technique of *brontologia*, i.e. omens of thunder, connected

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[26] Translation Goodenough 1953-68, vol. 8: 210f.

[27] *BJ* 5.217-218. Cf. also *BJ* 5.211-214 and *AJ* 3.145 and 179ff. For a similar interpretation of the menorah see also Philo *Mos.* 2.105; *Quaest. in Ex.* 2.73-79; *Rer. Div. Her.* 216-229.

[28] Smelik 1995: 138.

with the moon's way through the zodiac, to forecast the future.[29]
Philo, for his part, talked at some length about the planets as *sêmeia*
of future events (*Opif. mundi* 58f) and of the planetary influences on
agriculture and human fertility or sexuality (*Opif. mundi* 101.113.117).
In his tractate *de congressu eruditionis gratia* (§50) he even calls the
astronomia, the "science of astronomers and Chaldaeans," *basilis tôn
epistêmôn* — queen of the disciplines.

Monotheistic cult theology has a crucial implication: it is highly
sensitive with regard to purity and cultic correctness. This leads to a
harsh refutation of any polytheistic notion that was often misunder-
stood in scholarly analysis as being a fight against astrology itself. To
be sure, pious Jews — at least the priestly oriented ones — carefully
avoided the worship of astral deities. The biblical prophets had fought
against this branch of astrology, thus prefiguring the pattern of later ar-
gumentation. But how come that priestly Jews at Qumran or elsewhere
had obviously no problem in applying astrological techniques in their
daily religious life and even in the interpretation of politics and his-
tory? The only answer is that they were able to distinguish astrology
from astrolatry, *the interpretation of time from the worship of astral
entities*. Although this seems highly reasonable, most scholars — due
to their preconceived attitude — are not able to follow that distinc-
tion. They usually declare the Qumran priests, as well as the Enoch
astronomers, Philo of Alexandria, and Josephus Flavius to be radical
enemies of astrology. The opposite is the case — all these Jews fought
to purge astrology from cultic impurity and, as I shall show later, from
fatalism.

A further field of cult theology's special interest is connected with
the *calendar*. First, it is important to celebrate the religious festivals
at the right moment, i.e. in isomorphic correspondence to the cosmic
divine rhythms. The clash of different calendars, only understandable

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[29] For the horoscopes 4Q186 and 4Q534 cf. von Stuckrad 1996: 118-128 (litera-
ture); the brontologion 4Q318 is a much discussed topic, see Charlesworth 1987: 939;
Albani 1993 & 1994: 83-87; Maier 1995, vol. 2: 275-277; von Stuckrad 1996: 128-131
and the respective chapters in von Stuckrad 1999.

with regard to its cultic implications, was a driving factor for the Qumran Zadokites to break with the Jerusalem priests.[30] Calculating a calendar, therefore, is a highly religious act and it is correct to emphasize that priestly astronomy always and inevitably takes into consideration the *meaning of time*. Recent studies have shown that the Enochic calendar, visible in Qumran and the Enochic writings such as 1En, 2En, or the Book of Jubilees, mirrors a perfect harmony of several holy rhythms, especially the priestly important numbers six and seven.[31]

Secondly, priestly astronomy opens the door to a thorough exploration of the present time's quality. The calendar is a revealed pattern of holy history and the astronomical data led those who were able to 'read the signs' to a deep understanding of Jewish *Heilsgeschichte*. This is the bridge from priestly discourses to apocalyptic speculations vividly discussed among Enochic astronomers and other groups of Second Temple Judaism, later carried on by Christian interpreters of time.[32] What is at stake here is the erudite knowledge of the *exact point on the time-axis*. Of course, that erudition was a matter of dispute and much of the ancient conflicts was centered around that question. But one thing was never challenged — the importance of celestial events, such as the rhythms of sun and moon, their eclipses, planetary intervals, conjunctions, or comets, for a 'vertical' understanding of time's quality.

4.2. Magical and Mystical Application

The secrets of divine astronomy were revealed to a few religious specialists who made their way into the heavens or received their knowledge by God's own intervention: Enoch, Moses, Solomon, or

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[30] Talmon 1986; Chyutin 1993.

[31] The Qumran scriptures reveal a complicated but perfect system that later calculations were never again able to generate. Cf. Glessmer 1991; Albani 1994; Maier 1995, vol. 3: 52-160; Glessmer 1996; Beckwith 1996.

[32] For the latter see the calendars of the so-called Quartadecimaners and the discussion about the return of Christ, as described in Strobel 1977. Cf. also the 5th *excursus* in von Stuckrad 1999.

other heroes of Jewish tradition guaranteed the revelationary status of astrological information. But secret knowledge was not only attributed to those extraordinary persons. A lot of people in late antiquity were engaged in heavenly journeys in order to gain insight into the mysteries of God's cosmic order. Connected with that mystical orientation was an application of astrological skills in a way one would call magical. I may turn to this topic now.

During Greco-Roman times magic was a common religious activity. Recent studies into ancient magic revealed the fact that this kind of 'ritual power' flourished among Jews and Christians as well.[33] Just as in case of astrology, there is no reason to sever magic from pious Jewish or Christian faith, as theological historiography used to do. Nor is it appropriate to consider magic as being the religion for daily life purposes or poorly educated people. The complex rituals performed in the so-called *Mithras liturgy*, the *Sefer ha-razîm*, or some Gnostic documents demanded a high standard of education,[34] not to mention the philosophical skills of an Apuleius. The differences between sophisticated magical theory and practice, on the one hand, and the more pragmatic application for medical and daily life reasons, on the other, still await scholarly research.[35]

From the beginning astrological semantics formed an integral part of magical work. In order to illuminate this I shall describe three examples in more details. The first document to be mentioned is the important *Makroform* (in the Schäferian sense) that was shaped around

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[33] The literature is abundant. The change of paradigm concerning our understanding of magic can best be studied in Naveh & Shaked 1987; Gager 1992; Meyer & Mirecki 1995; Graf 1996; Schäfer & Kippenberg 1997.

[34] E.g. one may consider the fact that in *Sefer ha-razîm* 1: 94-96 the author suggests to consult an hieratic papyrus to predict the future and to write the message down in hieratic script.

[35] It seems that the former is represented by theurgic groups, philosophers, and others, the latter by the authors of PGM, magic bowls, and similar documents. But this distinction is far from being accurate. For the theurgic groups cf. S.I. Johnston: "Rising to the Occasion: Theurgic Ascent in Its Cultural Milieu," in: Schäfer & Kippenberg 1997: 165-194.

the figure of Solomon. The *Testament of Solomon* is its most important representative. The text's title makes sufficiently clear what the reader can expect:

> Testament of Solomon, son of David, who reigned in Jerusalem, and subdued all the spirits of the air, of the earth, and under the earth; through (them) he also accomplished all the magnificent works of the Temple; (this tells) what their authorities are against men, and by what angels these demons are thwarted.[36]

To unfold his magical power, Solomon, after having prayed to God, receives his famous seal ring from the archangel Michael. With the help of his magic ring Solomon is able to find out the names of the demonic powers and, subsequently, to thwart them.[37] Of astrological interest is the fact that Solomon forces the entities to tell him the zodiacal place they inhabit. For example:

> (2:1) When I heard these things, I, Solomon, got up from my throne and saw the demon shuddering and trembling with fear. I said to him, "Who are you? What is your name?" The demon replied, "I am called Ornias." (2) I said to him, "Tell me, in which sign of the zodiac do you reside?" The demon replied, "In Aquarius; I strangle those who reside in Aquarius because of their passion for women whose zodiacal sign is Virgo [...]."

The zodiacal astrology, combined here with demonological perspectives, is further attested by the seven constellations that appear through the power of Solomon's evocation:

> (8:1) There came seven spirits bound up together hand and foot, fair of form and graceful. When I, Solomon, saw them, I was amazed and asked them, "Who are you?" (2) They replied, "We are heavenly bodies [*esmen stoicheia*], rulers of this world of darkness [*kosmokratores tou skotous*]." (3) The first said, "I am Deception." The second said, "I am Strife." The third said, "I am Fate." The fourth said, "I am Distress." The fifth said, "I am Error." The sixth said, "I am Power." (4) The seventh said, "I am The Worst. Our stars in heaven look small, but we are named like gods. We change our position together and we live together, sometimes in Lydia, sometimes in Olympus, sometimes on the great mountain."

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[36] I follow D.C. Duling's translation in Charlesworth 1983-85, vol. 2: 935-987, who in most cases relies on McCowns's translation of 1922.

[37] Every magical act rests on the knowledge of the 'secret names.'

The seven *stoicheia* — heavenly bodies, planets, or just evil entities — belong to the most prominent actors of Jewish and Christian theology in late antiquity. They were known to Paul who reminded his audience that "we have not to fight against humans of flesh and blood but against the rulers and powers, the sovereigns of this dark world (*pros tous kosmokratores tou skotous toutou*), against the evil beings of the heavenly realm."[38] At this point, Paul adopts the same attitude as his Gnostic colleagues at Nag Hammadi:

> Then since Death was androgynous, he mixed with his nature and begot seven androgynous sons. These are the names of the males: Jealousy, Wrath, Weeping, Sighing, Mourning, Lamenting, Tearful Groaning. And these are the names of the females: Wrath, Grief, Lust, Sighing, Cursing, Bitterness, Quarrelsomeness. They had intercourse with one another, and each one begot seven so that they total fortynine androgynous demons. *Their names and their functions you will find in "the Book of Solomon."*[39]

Whether this passage refers to our Testament of Solomon, the *Epistle to Rehobeam*,[40] or some other text, is of minor relevance, since the *stoicheia* topic is widespread in ancient theology. And, equally acknowledged was the *depotencation of the celestial powers*, forced under Solomon's will who himself received his power from the almighty God. The intention is clear: the stars are under God's control and man is capable of invoking them in order to do some kind of pious work. Each adept, knowing the demons' secret names and performing Solomon's instructions, can accurately take part in the power — he himself becomes Solomon.

If one examines the lines of correspondences fashioned in the TestSol, one notices no determinable common traditions, e.g., the connection between Aquarius and Virgo (2:2, see above) — standing in the minor quincunx aspect — is not attested in the *vulgata*. Manilius talks of Sagittarius who "is in love with Virgo only" and Ptolemy

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[38] Eph. 6:12; cf. also Col. 2:4.20; Gal. 4:3.9.

[39] *On the Origin of the World* (NHC II.5 and XIII.2), tr. Bethge & Wintermute, in: Robinson 1988: 167.

[40] Ed. by J. Heeg in *CCAG* 8.2 (1911): 139-165.

assures the reader that a quincunx is irrelevant for interpretation.[41] However, this is not due to the author's missing acquaintance with astrological tradition but to the simple fact that, up to Ptolemy's outstanding work, there was no such common tradition available. But all of them were united in the 'vertical attitude' that stands in the background. This 'hermetic' perspective found its way into the Testament of Solomon as well:

> (20:14) I asked him, "Tell me, then, how you, being demons, are able to ascend into heaven." (15) He replied, "Whatever things are accomplished in heaven (are accomplished) in the same way also on earth; for the principalities and authorities and powers above fly around and are considered worthy of entering heaven."

It is important to note that the astrological techniques are not blamed in the text. Instead, the document's contribution to ancient discourses is the following: the doctrine of correspondences is not to be disputed. Knowledge of those correspondences — astrology — leads to a deep understanding of future events (cf. TestSol. 2:3; 20:12). To obtain that knowledge one has to control the demonic powers which inhabit the zodiacal sphere. Astrology, therefore, is a holy gift, handed over by God himself, and is embraced thankfully by man.

My second example belongs to the same matrix of discourse. In the 'Book of Mysteries,' the *sefer ha-razîm*, originating in the first centuries CE but compiled later, it is explained how "to master the investigation of the strata of the heavens, to go about in all that is in their seven abodes, to observe all the astrological signs, to examine the course of the sun, to explain the observations of the moon," and similar activities.[42] Repeatedly, the adept is requested to pour libation or sacrifice incense, or even animals, to the celestial bodies, thus

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[41] Manilius *Astron.* 2: 504-506; Ptolemy *Tetrabib.* 1:17.

[42] Preface to *SHR*: 5-10 (Morgan 1983: 17f). Morgan refers to Margalioth's unsufficient edition (1966). SHR still is a scholarly desideratum, cf. Gruenwald 1980: 226. An important first collection of the many astrological connotations within the PGM was given by H.G. Gundel 1968: 3-17 (Sun), 17-25 (decanes), 25-41 (Moon), 41-52 (planets). Gundel correctly stresses the significant doctrine of correspondences (cf. p. 39). The results can be transferred to SHR without difficulties.

revealing a totally different attitude towards cultic purity than that we had come across in priestly theology. The offerings are performed in order "to speak with the moon or with the stars about any matter." This has practical consequences: "I adjure you to bring the planet of N and his star near to the star and planet of N, so his love will be tied with the heart of N son of N" (*SHR* 1:161-167 [Morgan 1983: 36f]). Here, SHR shares the same language as the rabbis used to depict the planetary influences — one's star or *mazzal* (see below).

The following passage is very interesting because it indicates the overlapping of different discourses. To meet *Hêlios*/The Sun at night the adept is urged to celebrate purgation, keep diets, and utter the names of the sun and his accompanying angels. And then:

> [...] In the name of the Holy King who walks upon the wings of the wind,[43] by the letters of the complete name that was revealed to Adam in the Garden of Eden, (by) the Ruler of the planets, and the sun, and the moon, who bow down before Him as slaves before their masters, by the name of the wondrous God, I adjure you, that you will make known to me this great miracle that I desire, and that I may see the sun in his power in the (celestial) circle (traversed by) his chariot, and let no hidden thing be too difficult for me (*SHR* 4:51-57 [Morgan 1983: 70f]).

The defeat of the planets and their subsequent instrumentalization is fully in line with Jewish argumentation.[44] Furthermore, the visionary's search for a heavenly journey call similar texts of the Hekhalot tradition to mind, even rabbinical parallels may be mentioned.[45] Thus, Gruenwald correctly emphasizes that "these heavenly ascents of the soul became almost a cultural fashion in many religious systems in the first centuries of the Christian Era, the spiritual climate of which

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[43] Cf. Ps 104:3.

[44] In the paragraph following the cited passage the 'traditional' scope is widened, though. Helios — the Sun God — is furnished with epitheta usually reserved for JHWH: "Trustworthy leader of the sun's rays, reliable (witness), who of old didst establish the mighty wheel (of the heavens), holy orderer, ruler of the axis (of the heaven), Lord, Brilliant Leader, King, Soldier" (Morgan 1983: 71).

[45] Hekhalot literature: Hekhalot Zutarti §§335-374. 407-411.420.422f. The rabbinic tradition is focused on R. Aqiba, cf. tChag 2:3; jChag 77b; bChag 14b.

was full of a constant exchange of religious ideas and practices. In this respect there was no substantial difference between religion, philosophy and science."[46]

To further illuminate the nature of this discourse and its capability to transgress religious boundaries, I use a Christian source as my third example. Heavenly journeys are a key motif within Gnostic theologies, but — contrasting the Hekhalot mysticism where the mystic serves as a mediator between God and Israel — now the intentions are individual ones. The Gnostic searches for redemption either in the world to come or during her or his lifetime. Pursuing this goal, it is of crucial importance 'to know one's enemies,' i.e. to understand the heavenly opponents who try to block the mystic's way into the realms of light. This platonic notion is found in a variety of texts. In the *First Apocalypse of James* from Nag Hammadi it is Jesus himself who gave instructions: he admonishes his disciples to be confidential since, after his grievous way through death, he will return and "appear for a reproof to the archons. And I shall reveal to them that he cannot be seized. If they seize him, then he will overpower each of them."[47]

The recipient of the holy revelation is rescued from the powers of *heimarmenê* and can depart from this dark world heading through the planetary spheres towards the pleroma. In order to fulfill this desire it seemed appropriate to examine thoroughly the planetary laws. Thus, the fight against the *stoicheia* led the Gnostic to another reaction than Paul who, subsequently, refuted astrology. What at first glance seems inconsistent becomes the Gnostics' primary motivation for studying astrology. Just *because* Gnostic theology strives to overcome the demonic planetary chains it made extensive use of astrological tradition.

The Gnostic interest in astrology resulted in an extraordinary discourse of its own. Special treatises have come down to us elaborated

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[46] Gruenwald 1988: 202 with no. 30. Cf. on this topic Dean-Otting 1984.

[47] *NHC* 5.3:30, 2-6 (Robinson 1988: 264). Cf. also the *2nd Book of Jeû* ch. 52; the *Left Ginza* 3:56; *NHC* 7.127:20f. Those documents witness the correctness of Origen's bold remarks in *c. Cels.* 7.40 and 6.30f.

by *Markos* and *Theodotus*, both Valentinians, by *Bardaisan of Edessa*
and — last not least — by Mani. The details cannot be spelled out
here, since the discourse's meta-structure is my primary concern.[48]
But to summarize the feature of Gnostic astrology one comes to the
conclusion that, besides the topic of heavenly journeys and magical
empowerment, it is the hermetic doctrine of correspondences that is
of overwhelming importance.[49] This doctrine was applied to differ-
ent areas such as the 12 apostles, to zodiacal geography, or zodiacal
medicine (which is called *melothesia*). In most cases the doctrines of
the astrological tradition were well-known, at times even to a very so-
phisticated degree. Of further interest is the fact that the influence of
Egyptian doctrines, particularly the *decane* systems with their imple-
mentation of the numbers 36 and 72, had an important impact on Gnos-
tic astrology's proceedings.

4.3. Fate, Volition, Piety

I now enter one of the most difficult discourses of late antiquity.
The philosophical controversy about fate and volition made use of
the concepts of *heimarmenê* and *tychê*, applying them either in a
deterministic sense — mainly among stoic philosophers — or in
an anti-fatalistic manner. The latter's argumentative paradigm was
elaborated by Carneades and adopted by many scholars after him,
including Cicero, Philo of Alexandria, or Origen.[50] If these concepts
are contrasted with Jewish or Christian doctrines, several intriguing
questions arise: given the dominance of fate how can we still speak
of correct behavior from an ethical point of view? What is sin if

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[48] For detailed analyses see von Stuckrad 1999.

[49] See esp. the doctrines of Markos as described in Irenaeus *Adv. haer.* 1.14,3-6;
Epiphanius *Panarion* 34.5. Theodotus was the first to explore the correspondences be-
tween zodiacal signs and apostles, see *Excerpta ex Theodoto* 25.2. Bardaisan "has
to be called the first significant astrologer within the wider perspective of Chris-
tianity" (Gundel 1966: 326); that was witnessed by Eusebius *Praep. evang.* 6.9,32.
Mani's considerable contribution to monotheistic astrology is minutely examined in
von Stuckrad 1999, ch. X.

[50] This was impressively shown by Amand 1945.

everything is controlled by the heavenly bodies? Does prayer and piety make any sense in a deterministic concept? What about redemption? Questions like these mark the center of monotheistic controversies about fatalistic doctrines. However, the answers were much more complicated than most scholars assume since the ancient writers were enthusiastically trying to cope with the challenges through an integration of different philosophies rather than simply denying the validity of *heimarmenê* concepts. Thus, the modern notion that Jewish and Christian religions are *per se* excluding every fatalistic component does not meet the standard of ancient discourses.[51]

In this respect it is to be remembered that volition "is an artificial concept. We have to study certain specialist theories in order to find out how it is to be manipulated."[52] Turning to ancient discourses the possibility has to be acknowledged that people were talking about volition and fate in a way that did not mirror modern concepts of determinism and clock-work doctrines of Newtonian provenance. The complex ambiguities of monotheistic interest in fatalistic argumentation can be shown in a variety of documents. In the following, I restrict myself to Josephus Flavius and the highly influential discussion of the talmudic rabbis in bShab 156ab. It will be shown that astrological doctrines were easily adopted as soon as free will was secured, thus establishing a unique Jewish astrology.

Josephus Flavius makes extensive use of the common concepts of free will, determinism, and providence. For example, in his description of the Second Temple's destruction he chooses the following words: although one has to mourn for the loss of such a building "one gains affluent consolation in the notion that man's works and cities are as dependent on fate as living creatures. However, one has to wonder about the accuracy regarding the turning of the times this fate exhibits

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[51] The simple and highly theoretical dichotomy of determinism/astrology and monotheistic religions — leading to the dichotomy of force and prayer — is still widely accepted, cf. especially Wächter 1969.

[52] Ryle 1970: 61. The whole ch. 3 of Ryle's book is fruitful for the present discussion.

because it correlates, as I have already mentioned, exactly to the month and even the same day the temple was first ignited by the Babylonians (*BJ* 6.267-270)." Josephus insists on the fact that the Temple's destruction was determined by God from the outset, "and in the turning of the times the day scheduled by fate had now arrived (*parên de hê heimarmenê chronôn periodois* [*BJ* 6.249-250])." The *periods of time* structure political and religious history, thus making future developments determinable. This, however, is only half of the truth because Josephus emphasizes the Jewish responsibility for the *success* of God's plans: "To be sure," he says, "this time the burning of the Temple was the fault and guilt of the Jews themselves (*BJ* 6.250)." What seems, at first glance, to be an inconsistency illuminates the very struggle Josephus fought to integrate the perspective of his Roman readers — which was his own, too — into the *Heilsgeschichte* of the Jewish people. Josephus argues that *heimarmenê* is to be regarded as the hand of Providence which is God's own work. Thus, *heimarmenê* helps to make manifest the primordial plan. At the same time there exists a kind of meta-law that connects the unfolding of Jewish history with ethical notions known from deuteronomistic theology. Israel, through righteous or sinful behavior, is itself responsible for her fate. Consequently, God's will is insolubly molded by *heimarmenê*.[53]

Given the primordial blueprint of history and the responsibility of the Jewish people to make the plan come true, it is of crucial importance to understand God's hidden message. A specialist is needed to interpret the heavenly signs and figure out the present point on the historical line. Here the astrological interpretation comes into play. Josephus tells us that before the Temple's destruction God had given unmistakable signs that were ignored by the people (*BJ* 6.288-291). A comet was visible for one year indicating not the Jewish victory but the triumph of Vespasian: "But people are not able to escape their fate, even if they foresee it. The Jews interpreted some of the omens according to their wishes, ignored others light-minded, until the fall of their capitol and their own ruin convinced them of their stupidity (*BJ* 6.314-

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[53] Cf. also *BJ* 6.99-110 and *AJ* 16.394-399.

315)."[54] There can be no doubt that Josephus (in his own perception) belonged to those who were able to read the heavenly signs correctly. His opposition was not directed against the validity of astrological interpretation but against those charlatans who — by means of selfish and foolish interpretations — led Israel astray.

An interesting parallel to Josephus' account is found in the ambiguous position towards astrology adopted by the Sibylline Oracles of Jewish origin. On the one hand, a resolute refutation of cultic transgression such as divination, sorcery, and astrolatry is proposed,[55] on the other hand, the oracles make use of genuine astrological speech in describing the "clear signs" indicating the "end of all things on earth," namely "when swords appear on the starry sky at night in the evening and also against dawn."[56] The allusion to comet theories is apparent. Furthermore, the oracles employ the same matrix of fate and volition so prominent in Josephus. History is depicted as the result of foresight (*pronoia*) and fate (*tychê*) that mingles with cultic obedience or transgression by the Jewish people. About the politics of Nero the Sibyl finds the following words: "For murder and terrors are in store for all men because of the great city and because of the righteous people which is preserved throughout everything, which Providence held in special place." Furthermore, "Arrogance, unstable one of evil counsels, surrounded by evil fates, the beginning and great end of toil for men when creation is spoiled and saved again by the fates (5:225-230)."

The peculiar combination of Jewish piety and astrological determination was not limited to hellenized Jews such as Josephus. Indeed, it is also found in the Christian claim that the star of Bethlehem signaled the Messiah's birth. But even more interesting is the special emphasis

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[54] The comet and other omens were usually interpreted similarly to Josephus' account. Cf. Eusebius *Hist. Eccl.* 3.8,2; Hegesippus *Hist. Eccl.* 5.44; Tacitus *Hist.* 5.13 and Suetonius *Vespasian* 4.

[55] *Oracula Sibyllina* 3:218-233.

[56] *Oracula Sibyllina* 3:796-800. "Fiery swords" are also mentioned in 3:672-679; cf. *Oracula Sibyllina* 5:155-161 and 5:206-213. Book 5 has also an explicit messianic interpretation of Num. 24:17: "From the vaults of heaven came a blessed man carrying the scepter in his hands, which had been commissioned to him by God (5:414)."

rabbinical discourse laid on the hidden nexus between fate and piety. Whereas the Mishna's account on astrology was mainly concerned with cultic implications, midrashic and talmudic literature displays a deep-going interest in all aspects of heavenly prediction. The highest standard of argument was achieved in the Babylonian Talmud which is to be regarded as a coherent, partly pseudepigraphic piece of literature, created by an independent group of Jewish scholars who *used* tradition rather than simply interpreting it.[57] Hence, the sugya bShab 156ab, as *locus classicus* usually pulled up when the rabbis' attitude towards astrology is at stake, assembles diversified lines of argument attributed to different rabbinical names. The attribution to names never give access to a chronological development of rabbinical positions as has been assumed by many scholars. Instead, this sugya has to be interpreted as a constructed argumentation of later discourse that merely reflects previous developments. This does not mean, of course, that the Bavli is a-historical or ignorant with regard to Jewish tradition. It simply implies that bShab 156ab — as well as all other sugyot — must be studied on its own merits before we can ask for any textual or historical connection with other sources.

The passage under consideration consists of three parts. First, the text refers to Rabbi Jehoshua ben Levi's note book and its description of how people's fate will be like if they are born on Monday, Tuesday etc. The second part is introduced by Rabbi Chanina saying, "Go and tell the son of Levi: It is not the *mazzal* of the day but the *mazzal* of the hour that determines (people's fate)." In the following, the rulership of the planets is connected with the birth's hour, thus leading to a more individual interpretation of the zodiacal correspondence. In the third part, the concept of *mazzal* is explained in more detail, focusing on the question whether Israel has a *mazzal* of her own. Three small haggadic

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[57] As can easily be recognized, in this assumption I follow the 'House of Neusner.' Cf. among many other publications Neusner 1992-93; Jacobs 1991: 17. Neusner's stress on the discourse analyses comes very close to my methodological assumptions; cf. Neusner 1997.

episodes are told in order to reveal the mysterious connection between Israel's piety and determination of fate.

In short, the rabbis display a considerable insight into astrological tradition. Most of the attributions of days of the week and planets to certain characteristics are in harmony with the *vulgata*, though a typical Jewish perspective had sometimes its impact on the interpretation, e.g., the correspondence between Wednesday — Mercury — and intellectual or rational competence or the gathering of information is the result of common astrological discourse, but the secondary explanation of this correspondence is rabbinical: The Hebrew word *ᶜor* stands either for good memory or the heavenly lights. The same is true for Thursday corresponding, as usual, with Jupiter and his jovial and generous nature. Either 'Jupiter' or 'generosity' is depicted with the Hebrew term *tsedeq/tsᵉ daqah*. This is also maybe an explanation for the ascription of fish and birds — both are symbols for multiplicity and superabundance (cf. Gen. 1:20-22) and do not fall under the halakhot on meat, thus signifying the generous freedom from religious laws.

A similar eclectic use of the astrological tradition is prevailing almost everywhere within the talmudic perspective. Since the relation between (planetary) fate and monotheistic volition is my present concern, I shortly turn to the concluding part of the sugya. The three episodes illuminating the rabbis' controversy about the influence of the *mazzal* all follow the same pattern: astrological prediction is contrasted with the factual results in such a way that the general 'energetic' interpretation remains true, although the 'levels' of the corresponding facts are altered due to Jewish piety.[58] The astrologer Ablat got it right when he prophesized that a snake will bite the man he was watching with Shmuel, but due to a good deed the (Jewish) man altered the manifestation and the snake was found in his bag cut in two pieces. Thus, this little story gives no evidence for Israel

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[58] "Astrology was the 'hook' on which an extremely important theological confrontation took place; the confrontation between pagan fatalism and Jewish insistence on Divine Election, Divine Salvation, and Free Will; both through works (R. Samuel and R. Akiba) and through faith (R. Nachman) (Dobin 1983: 197)."

being completely independent of astrological notions. That "there is
no *mazzal* for Israel" (*ain mazzal le-jisrael*) means that Israel — and
only Israel — is freed from a simple-structured determination, thus
giving way to an astrology without fatalistic implications. Through
a pious life, according to torah, Jews are able to move freely across
the 'correspondence spectrum,' whereas the accuracy of astrological
prediction is never challenged.[59]

4.4. The Imperial Utilization of Astrology

Heavenly signs always played a considerable role for the legislation
of power. During imperial Roman times, when astrology shaped the
very center of public discourse, the instrumentalization of heavenly
signs culminated in a variety of senses. The emperor's horoscope
was publicly made known in order to emphasize that his claim for
power corresponds with divine election and predetermination. In the
course of time the imperial cult fostered a solarization of religion with
the emperor's divinization, on the one hand, and the extended use of
astrological semantics on the other.

Such a political thinking was not limited to the Roman sovereigns. It
was adopted by the Hasmonaeans, Herod, and the Christian emperors
alike. But now the Jewish religious tradition was brought up, thus com-
bining the contemporary discourses that looked forward to a change of
time with one's own religious identity. During intertestamental times a
lot of documents raised yet another point of argument — the superior-
ity of the Jewish religion over pagan claims. Those texts try to proof
that scientific, ethical, and political knowledge had been elaborated
and guarded by the Israelites since early times, whereas later devel-
opments were only possible due to Jewish transmission. Against this
background the numerous legends about Abraham are to be understood
teaching astrology to 'Chaldeans' or Egyptians. The hero can also be

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[59] Neusner (1965-70, vol. 5: 192) correctly observes: "The rabbis generally ac-
cepted the accuracy of astrological predictions for Israel as a whole and for individual
Jews." Far two simple is Urbach's comment: "Astrology not only contradicted the
freedom of human choice, but also impaired the concept of Providence, that is, the
doctrine of the free will and unrestricted power of God (1975: 277)."

Moses or Enoch — in every case the intention is to give evidence to Jewish superiority in religious matters.[60]

With regard to Jewish and Christian discourses there emerged an own pattern of argument, clustering around the famous prophecy of Bileam in Num. 24:17: "A star will go out of Jacob, a scepter will rise from Israel." The messianic connotation of this pagan prophecy[61] captured the imagination of many Jews and Christians, especially of those striving for political power. A short summary may illustrate this:[62]

The Hasmonaean kings made extensive use of astrological symbolism usually dragging on Bileam's prophecy. During the reign of Alexander Jannaj a variety of coins were minted all bearing a star as prominent symbol. The *Hasmonaean star* can be depicted with eight rays or six points, with or without a circle, what Meshorer calls "perhaps the most common Jewish coin."[63] To understand the astrological doctrine standing behind Alexander's coins one has to take into account that his year of birth, 126 BCE, was marked by an important heavenly event, namely the so-called 'great conjunction' of Jupiter and Saturn in Pisces, i.e. a triple conjunction made possible by the planets' retrograde movements.[64] In ancient cosmological thinking the cycles

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[60] This claim is very old. It can be traced to Artapanos (2nd century BCE) and his Jewish history (*peri Ioudaiôn*) which is fragmentarily transmitted through Eusebius *Praep. Ev.* 9.8; 23; 27.

[61] There can be no doubt about the messianic impact, since the targumim translate "King of Jacob" and "Messiah of Israel" (Targum Onkelos and Targum Pseudo-Jonathan), and the Codex Neofiti (FrgmT) has "Once a *King* will rise from the House of Jacob, and a *redeemer* and *emperor* from the House of Israel." Cf. also the LXX rendering "A star will emerge from Jacob, a *man* (*antrôpos*) will rise from Israel."

[62] Von Stuckrad 1999, ch. III, gives a detailed analysis of the topic. Cf. also the bibliography presented there. Laato 1997 has shown that the messianic concept visible in Jewish and Christian discourse has its roots in Near Eastern royal ideology.

[63] Meshorer 1967: 119. Cf. also Kanael 1963 and Meshorer 1982.

[64] Actually, 126 BCE the great conjunction was not completed, since the retrograde phase of Jupiter ended with an orbis of 1°05′ to Saturn. The next exact great conjunction happened in 7 BCE (see below). The conjunction was calculated beforehand by Babylonian astrologers, cf. Kugler 1907-1935, vol. 2: 498f.

of Jupiter and Saturn were of extraordinary importance and the rare triple conjunctions always raised considerable speculations.[65] Jupiter was usually connected with kingship and royalty, whereas Saturn, being the seventh star and thus heralding the Sabbath, was attributed to the Jewish people. When Alexander — and his family — minted coins bearing the Hasmonaean star he laid claim on his sovereignty's divine election made visible by the great conjunction. His reign was the fulfillment of Bileam's prophecy.

Herod the Great, for his part, read the heavenly signs differently. Yet, he applied the same pattern of arguments. Being deeply engaged in the skilled astrological discourse, Herod saw himself as the Jewish Messiah who is to establish a divine reign for his people.[66] He was the new star rising from Israel. Given the astrological orientation of his politics Herod was extremely sensitive when it came to extraordinary heavenly spectacles. Taken this into account it is no longer surprising to find the king aggressively reacting to the challenge of his power during the years 7 and 6 BCE. What at first glance seems to be an outburst of persecution mania — the slaughtering of his wife, his sons, and a whole bunch of enemies[67] — turns out to be a 'reasonable' answer to the planetary threat. A great conjunction of Jupiter and Saturn took place in the last decade of Pisces, i.e. exactly on the vernal equinox of the time. Since the discovery of Hipparchus (2nd century BCE) the precession of the equinoxes was well-known and skilled people were aware of the extraordinary zodiacal place the planets gathered at in those years.[68]

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[65] A very good survey is given by Strobel 1987.

[66] Cf. the impressive biography of Schalit 1969 (for Herod's messianism see p. 476). In a speech Herod says, according to Josephus: "I think, through the will of god I helped the Jewish people to gain a level of wealth that was never known before (*AJ* 15.383) [...] But now, through God's will, I am the emperor, and there will be a long period of piece and superfluous wealth and income (*AJ* 15.387)."

[67] Josephus reports the events extensively in *AJ* 16.73-76.328-334.361-394. Cf. also Schalit 1967: 620-628.

[68] Cf. Strobel 1987: 1051.

The interpretation was now apparent: the last important conjunction of Jupiter and Saturn in 126 BCE brought forth a Jewish kingdom that was to last for 27 years and was extended enormously in area and influence; what more could be expected when it comes to a genuine great conjunction on the vernal equinox, stressed further by the planet Mars. No doubt, the events called for decided and resolute action and so Herod went for it. Furthermore, the king was driven by an enigmatic prophecy, once uttered by a Pharisee, that Herod was to lose his power "by God's decree" (*AJ* 17.43f). Again, politics were deeply impregnated with astrological notions and Josephus himself raises the question whether these events are not to be regarded as the influence of necessity (*anankê*) or heavenly fate (*heimarmenê*).[69] This interpretation leads us right into the center of ancient discourses.

The Christian version of the triple conjunction's 'true meaning' was near at hand. From this perspective, the birth of the Messiah was accompanied by a heavenly sign and the great conjunction was molded into the 'Star of Bethlehem,' thus ensuring the belief in Jesus' divine origin. Generally, *the stars as signs* is a common motif within either canonical or non-canonical writings and the star of the Messiah intrigued the early Christians. From the second century on patristic literature discussed its theological implications. It is interesting to note that Origen's reading of the planetary movements as the writing of God's own hand (see above) was also applied to the birth of Jesus.

If it is right to say that the great conjunctions of Jupiter and Saturn had an astonishing impact on politics and self-definition one can assume that the next triple contact of the two would raise old questions anew. This was the case in the year 134 CE, during the Bar-Kokhba revolt, and it can be shown that astrological interpretation sheds light on the difficult psychological and historical circumstances of the Jewish rebellion. For this purpose, it is noteworthy to address the fact that Hadrian, who besieged Jerusalem and changed its name into *Aelia Capitolina* — a sanctuary for Jupiter, — was an astrologer him-

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[69] *AJ* 16.397. Cf. Schalit 1969: 627 and Strobel 1987: 1073.

self.[70] He was by all means a skilled expert and there can be no doubt that he arranged his politics in accordance with astrological calculation.[71] Turning to the Jewish rebels one finds a similar embeddedness. First, the very name of the leader — Bar Kokhba/aram. Bar Koseba, i.e. 'son of the star' — reveals not only a messianic expectation but also its astrological connotation. This notion was obviously common, even within Christian circles, for Eusebius of Caesaraea pretends: "The Jews' leader was [a man] named Bar Kokhba [*Barchôchebas*] which means *star*. Although he was a bloodthirsty and rapacious man he was, due to his name, honored in a slavish manner as *lantern* [*phôstêr*] that had come down from heaven to help the oppressed and illuminating them (*Hist. Eccl.* 4.6,2)."

Second, during the revolt a number of coins were minted with a star as symbol above the temple front. In some cases the motif resembles a rosette or a small wave, so that no final decision is possible about its meaning.[72] But the fact that Jews fashioned their most valuable coins, the silver tetradrachms, with a star-rosette on a marked position calls for explanation. The temple — and even more the *new* temple — was not mere decoration but program and propaganda.[73] Its interpretation as a star fits very well into the discourses of the day that were shared by pagans and Jews. Of importance is the fact that the conjunction of Jupiter and Saturn was observable all the time, thus enabling the Jews not familiar with astronomical calculus to make up their own minds about time's quality.

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[70] The renaming of the city can either be a thankful act to Jupiter *after* the victory over the Jews/Saturn or a preparing act *before* the siege. Thus, this interpretation does not solve the much-discussed difficulties of the termination of Hadrian's decision.

[71] Cf. Cramer 1954: 162ff.

[72] Cf. Meshorer 1967 & 1982. Enthusiastically positive about the star is Strobel 1987: 1106; critical is Mildenberg 1984: 45. Sure about the star, but not about its messianic connotation, is Schäfer 1981: 65.

[73] Contra Mildenberg 1984: 45.

5. Results

Astrology is the key discipline for interpreting time. Based on the doctrine of correspondences it developed different branches where people sought to gain insight into the *meaning* of past, present, and future events. I described those branches in terms of various discourses that were much more intricate than modern scholarship, with its limited and preconceived perspective, usually acknowledges. As the dominant tool for analyzing time's quality, astrology was embraced and applied by Jews and Christians alike. Monotheism's criticism focused either on deterministic worldviews, not compatible with ethical propositions, or on the adoration of astral deities which is not in agreement with Jewish or Christian cult tradition. But to call this astrology means to neglect the refined standard of ancient discourses about the relation between both zodiac, stars, and earth as well as volition, fate, and ethics.

What is to be recognized in the Jewish and Christian documents, instead, is a serious attempt to blend astrological traditions with their own religious identities. In the course of this process astrological doctrines often had to undergo a transformation, sometimes necessitating a thorough-going modification. This can best be studied within the Manichaean context where the standard — and highly symbolic — number of seven 'planets' had to be modulated into a pentadic system due to Mani's preference for the number five.[74] Another example was the rabbinical discourse where the *primacy of religious coherence over astrological consistency* is also a key feature. Thus, the ancient monotheistic discourses were not ignited by questions of justification or refutation of astrology *as such*, but clustered around the *right interpretation* of heavenly signs. Each party claimed to have the correct knowledge of the 'message of God's hand' according to Jewish and Christian *Heilsgeschichte*. Each party made use of astrology as a helpful means for legitimizing their own religious position.

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[74] Sun and moon were highly honored by Manichaean theology, so that they had to be removed from the 'seven archons' known from Gnostic contexts. For Manichaean astrology, up to now only merely examined, cf. von Stuckrad 1999: ch. X.

Future scholarship should not dismiss astrology's central status for Jewish and Christian thinking in late antiquity — and beyond.

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JOHN WESLEY SLEPT HERE:
AMERICAN SHRINES AND AMERICAN METHODISTS

Thomas A. Tweed

Summary

Historians of religion have devoted little attention to shrines in the United States, and the limited scholarship that is available has overlooked Protestants. Protestants, most interpreters have assumed, do not have shrines or make pilgrimages. In this essay I define and classify shrines, surveying a wide range of sacred sites in the United States. Then I challenge the assumptions about Protestants and pilgrimage. Focusing on the United Methodists, I argue that while the spiritual descendants of John Wesley do not consecrate all types of sacred sites or endorse all pilgrimage practices, commemorative shrines play a role in American Methodist piety. If I am right, Protestants, and American Methodists in particular, are less anomalous in the history of religion than most scholars have assumed.

On a winter morning in 1736 Methodism's founder John Wesley first stepped on American soil. He landed on uninhabited Cockspur Island, just off the Savannah coast, and there on a small hill the British religious leader fell to his knees to give thanks for a safe journey. Today Methodist pilgrims make journeys of their own to that spot — to recall Wesley's landing and return to Methodist origins. To officially recognize the site's sacrality, in 1976 the United Methodist Church named John Wesley's American Parish, which includes Cockspur Island and six other Savannah sites, the nineteenth "national Methodist shrine."

The denomination's use of the term *shrine* to mark this sacred place might seem odd. Methodists, after all, don't have shrines — or at least most scholars of religion have presupposed that. Catholics have shrines, the standard view goes, and so do Buddhists, Jains, Hindus,

and Muslims. But most Protestants seem to eschew round-trip journeys to sacred sites.[1]

There is some truth in this view, and Protestant suspicions about shrines and pilgrimage have roots that extend to the Reformation, when reformers and their followers challenged the alleged abuses of Roman Catholic practice. In this Protestant view, establishing shrines and promoting pilgrimage risks endorsing the Catholic sacramental worldview with its mistaken, even morally dangerous, collapse of the distinction between the sacred and the secular. To designate a site as sacred, and venerate persons or objects there, muddles Protestants' understanding of God's relation to the world. It distracts from the authentic sources of religious authority and power: sacred scripture and religious experience. As shrines venerate saints and celebrate miracles they open the door to papist superstition. In short, they risk idolatry.

In this essay I begin by defining and classifying shrines, surveying a wide range of sacred sites in the United States. Then I challenge the assumptions about Protestants and pilgrimage. Focusing on the United Methodists, I argue that while the spiritual descendants of John and Charles Wesley do not consecrate all types of sacred sites or endorse all pilgrimage practices, commemorative shrines play a role in American Methodist piety. If I am right, Protestants, and American Methodists in particular, are less anomalous in the history of religion than most scholars have assumed.

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[1] The only scholarly volume dedicated exclusively to U.S. shrines and pilgrimage is G. Rinschede and S.M. Bhardwaj, eds., *Pilgrimage in the United States, Geographia Religionum*, vol. 5 (Berlin: Dietrich Reimer Verlag, 1990). It includes three chapters on Catholic shrines, two on quasi-religious sites, and one each on Sikh, Mormon, and Hindu shrines. None of the chapters focuses on Protestant sacred sites. The same pattern holds in guidebooks that claim comprehensiveness: Colin Wilson, *The Atlas of Holy Places and Sacred Sites* (New York: D.K. Publishers, 1996); and Paul Lambourne Higgins, *Pilgrimages USA: A Guide to Holy Places of the United States for Today's Traveler* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall, 1985).

Shrines and Pilgrims

The original meaning of *shrine* in Old English (*scrin*) and Latin (*scrinium*) suggests that it is a box or repository. In this original and more limited usage, shrines are repositories for a revered body or venerated relic, and devotees often have commemorated holy persons by constructing shrines over tombs or placing remains in them. In its broader meaning, however, shrine refers to a sacred site that houses holy artifacts, promotes ritual practice, and attracts religious travelers, who often mark the time and extend the space of the journey by returning home with mementos. These sacred sites function as mediating spaces or transitional zones by allowing a vertical movement toward the sacred, elevating devotees and bringing low the transcendent, as pilgrims petition and thank the gods and saints. Shrines also allow horizontal movement outward into the social terrain and built environment. In this sense, they culturally situate devotees by creating interpersonal bonds, negotiating social status, and constructing collective identity. Shrines differ from other places of worship such as local churches, mosques, temples, or synagogues, which attract visitors on a more regular basis and from a narrower geographical range.[2]

In other words, shrines usually attract *pilgrims*, religiously-motivated travelers who undertake infrequent round-trip journeys to sites they consider sacred. At their destination, and along the way, pilgrims engage in religious practices that might include ritualized speech, dress, and gesture. Pilgrimage sites sometimes stand far from the follower's home, and sometimes the length and arduousness of the journey is itself spiritually significant. Whether or not the destination is distant and the journey difficult, most pilgrims, who are temporarily or permanently changed by the experience, carry something home with them. For contemporary pilgrims that can mean a range of artifacts

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[2] For an overview of shrines see Paul B. Courtright, "Shrines," in Mircea Eliade, ed., *Encyclopedia of Religion* (New York: Macmillan, 1987); s.v. "shrine" in Jonathan Z. Smith, ed., *The HarperCollins Dictionary of Religion* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1995); and Thomas A. Tweed, "Shrine," in Wade Clark Roof, ed., *Contemporary American Religion* (New York: Macmillan, forthcoming).

— from holy cards and T-shirts to postcards and photographs. Upon their return, devotees recall and extend the sacred journey by wearing (or carrying) mementos, giving them to loved ones, or placing them in the home, thereby sacralizing domestic space and linking it with the pilgrimage site.[3]

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[3] There have been five main approaches to the study of pilgrimage. First, highlighting change over time, the historical approach has emphasized the distinctiveness of each pilgrimage and its embededness in the cultural context and the sponsoring religion. Second, a sociological view, inspired by the writings of Emile Durkheim, presupposes that pilgrimages reflect broader social processes: for example, they bolster social status and construct collective identity. Guided by the writings of Mircea Eliade and other religion scholars, a phenomenological approach has identified pilgrimage's common features by theorizing across religions and cultures. Claiming to be more sympathetic to the participants' interpretations, these scholars have seen pilgrimage as an encounter with the sacred. In opposition to functionalist sociological theories, they also have highlighted religion's sui generis character, criticizing those who reduce the phenomenon to social, cultural, or economic impulses. A fourth approach, anthropological, has had the most scholarly influence, and Victor Turner and Edith Turner have produced the most influential anthropological theory. For them, pilgrimage is a rite of passage: the pilgrim begins in the social structure, departs from it during the ritual, and then returns (transformed) to society. During the pilgrimage, the Turners argue, devotees stand in a liminal state, where the usual social hierarchies are suspended and an egalitarian spirit of "communitas" temporarily holds. In the 1991 book *Contesting the Sacred*, its editors, John Eade and Michael J. Sallnow, directly challenged the reigning Turnerian model. Eade and Sallnow saw contestation where the Turners found consensus. Pilgrimages, in this revisionist anthropological view, do not have a fixed meaning or produce a shared feeling of commonality. Rather, pilgrimage sites are social arenas where devotees negotiate meaning and power. A fifth approach to the study of pilgrimage comes from cultural geographers, who have drawn on the theories by Eliade, Turner, and (more recently) Eade and Sallnow. S.M. Bhardwaj, C. Prorok, G. Rinschede, and other geographers, have produced textured studies of contemporary pilgrimage sites, yet they have not offered a fully developed theory of religious travel. However, a greater sensitivity to the significance of space and place distinguishes the work of geographers, who have charted the flow of pilgrims and mapped the landscape of pilgrimage. Among the most important books on pilgrimage, many of which I mentioned above, see Victor Turner and Edith Turner *Image and Pilgrimage in Christian Culture: Anthropological Perspectives* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1978); Simon and John Elsner, *Pilgrimage: Past and Present in World Religions* (Cambridge:

Most religious traditions have pilgrimage sites, but the meanings and functions of those shrines vary widely. We can classify the variety of shrines in several ways.

Shrines can be classified, first, by religious tradition. So using this apparently straightforward scheme, we could note that El Santuario de Chimayó in New Mexico, currently one of the most frequently visited Catholic pilgrimage sites in the United States, is a Christian shrine. However, sometimes classifying shrines by religious affiliation can be more difficult. Some sites inscribe multiple religious influences, and self-consciously ecumenical sacred spaces claim to venerate multiple traditions, as with the 1986 Light of Truth Universal Shrine at Satchidananda Ashram in Virginia. And classifying shrines by religious affiliation is problematic because that method overlooks quasi-religious sites. Some places that claim secular status nonetheless share some of the standard features of shrines, for example, nationalistic spaces like the Washington Monument and tourist destinations like Cooperstown's Baseball Hall of Fame.[4]

Shrines also can be classified geographically since they vary in placement and scope. Although there are very few of these in the United States, some shrines, such as Lourdes in France and Muhammed's tomb in Saudi Arabia, become international sites, drawing

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Harvard University Press, 1995); John Eade and Michael J. Sallnow, eds., *Contesting the Sacred: The Anthropology of Christian Pilgrimage* (London and New York: Routledge, 1991); Alan Morinis, ed., *Sacred Journeys: The Anthropology of Pilgrimage* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1992); and Mary Lee Nolan and Sidney Nolan, *Christian Pilgrimage in Modern Western Europe* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1989).

[4] On Chimayó, see Ramón A. Gutiérrez, "El Santuario de Chimayó: A Syncretic Shrine in New Mexico," in Ramón A. Gutiérrez and Geneviève Fabre, *Feasts and Celebrations in North American Ethnic Communities* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1995), 71-86. On the Light of Truth Universal Shrine, see Thomas A. Tweed and Stephen Prothero, eds., *Asian Religions in America: A Documentary History* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 253-57. On quasi-religious sites in the United States and elsewhere, see Ian Reader and Tony Walter, eds., *Pilgrimage in Popular Culture* (London: Macmillan, 1993).

pilgrims from many nations. Others are national as saints — for example, St. James in Spain and Our Lady of Guadalupe in Mexico — become entwined with the nation's history and identity. Regional shrines attract devotees from a few counties or states, while local shrines draw visitors from a single town or city. Narrowing the scope still more, some shrines decorate pathways or mark the boundary between domestic and civic space, as with Afro-Cuban yard shrines in Miami. Homes become sacred, too, as devotees place images and artifacts associated with holy persons on bedroom walls or living room altars. And recent technological innovations, especially the internet, have made some shrines even less spatially fixed: web pages allow cyberpilgrims to email prayers, check schedules, and take virtual tours.[5]

Finally, shrines also can be classified by their origin and function, even if most sites share features of several types. *Commemorative shrines* recall the site of key historical or mythological events (e.g., a founder's vision or the world's creation), and pilgrims recount historical narratives or sacred myths about the deeds done there as they perform rituals that memorialize holy persons or transport followers to religiously significant times or places. Some American Indian sacred sites, for example, are commemorative: several mountains in New Mexico and Arizona mark places where the Pueblo, Hopi, and Navajo peoples first were told to settle or first established their spiritual relationships with bear, deer, and eagle. *Miraculous shrines*, a second type, mark the site of miraculous interventions or sacred encounters, such as apparitions and healings. Many shrines acquire a reputation for their healing powers. The holy dirt at El Santuario de Chimayó, for example, draws Latino pilgrims who believe it has the power to heal body and soul, and those who are transformed

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[5] On Cuban yard shrines in Miami, see James R. Curtis, "Miami's Little Havana: Yard Shrines, Cult Religion, and Landscape," *Journal of Cultural Geography* 1 (Fall/Winter 1980): 1-15. For an example of a webpage that promises cyberpilgrims a "virtual tour" see www.nationalshrine.com., the site sponsored by the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception in Washington, D.C.

leave notes or crutches to signal their thanks. Sometimes shrines also originate because followers find or acquire relics, objects considered sacred because of their association with holy persons (*built or found-object shrines*), or because devotees want to give thanks that an individual or group was saved from some crisis or catastrophe (*ex voto shrines*). Other shrines are self-consciously constructed on sites that do not recall historical events, mark miraculous interventions, house ancient relics, or thank a deity. Some of these, *imitative shrines*, replicate images and architecture from older sites elsewhere, as with the many American Catholic sites whose design mirrors European pilgrim centers like Lourdes and as with American Hindu centers like Pittsburgh's Sri Venkateswara Temple, which recalls one of the most sacred sites in South India, the hilltop shrine of Tirupati. Other self-consciously created pilgrimage sites, *identity shrines*, celebrate saints or deities that mark ethnic, religious, or national identity. These shrines have been especially important to first and second generation immigrants, as they make sense of themselves in the new American cultural context.[6]

Shrines and Pilgrims in the U.S.

Americans have journeyed to all these types of shrines, both in the United States and abroad. Some American pilgrims — those with sufficient time and money — have traveled abroad to sites they considered sacred. A very small proportion of these journeys led to quasi-religious sites, those with civil religious importance such as American

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[6] On Sri Venkatesvara Temple, see Fred W. Clothey, *Rhythm and Intent: Ritual Studies from South India* (Madras: Blackie and Son, 1983), 164-200. Examples of identity shrines include Marian centers for Polish Catholics in Doylestown, Pennsylvania, and for Cuban Catholics in Miami. See Gabriel Lorenc, *American Czestochowa* (Doylestown, Penn.: National Shrine of Our Lady of Czestochowa, 1989); and Thomas A. Tweed, *Our Lady of the Exile: Diasporic Religion at a Cuban Catholic Shrine in Miami* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997). Among the recent books on the quasi-religious dimensions of fan devotion at Elvis Presley's former home see Erika Doss, *Elvis Culture: Fans, Faith, and Image* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1999).

war memorials in Europe or other foreign sites with historical con-
nections. For example, Alfred T. Story's 1908 guidebook *American
Shrines in England* introduced American travelers to civil religious
sites such as George Washington's and Benjamin Franklin's ancestral
homes. Much more commonly, American travelers have visited the tra-
ditional pilgrimage sites in Europe, Asia, and the Middle East. Fast
and inexpensive air travel, allows thousands of contemporary Amer-
ican Catholics annually to take guided tours of the great pilgrimage
centers in Europe, Lourdes and Fatima, as well as newer apparitional
sites such as Medjugorje and Mount Melleray. And each year many
Christians — Protestant, Eastern Orthodox, and Catholic — travel to
the Holy Land. Some U.S. Jews imagine a trip to Israel, and the sacred
sites there, as decisive for identity, even as a rite of passage to Jew-
ish adulthood. During the turbulent late-nineteenth century and again
during and after the restless 1960s, small numbers of elite American
Buddhist and Hindu converts homaged sacred sites in India and Japan,
while Asian American followers who entered the United States after
the new immigration act of 1965 also have returned to holy places in
their homeland. Pilgrimage to Mecca is a duty for all able Muslims,
and approximately five thousand American followers fulfill that oblig-
ation each year.[7]

If some American pilgrims have crossed national borders, others
have traveled to destinations in the United States. Some of those des-
tinations, like battlefields and monuments, are quasi-religious, sharing
some of the features of traditional pilgrimage sites. Journeys to the
Stonewall Jackson Shrine in Virginia or to the Lincoln Memorial in the
capital can blur the lines between tourism and pilgrimage since those
sites have meaning for the celebration of America's civil religion, the
religious or quasi-religious symbols and practices associated with the
political sphere. Visitors to some civil religious sites, like the Vietnam

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[7] Alfred T. Story, *American Shrines in England* (London: Methuen, 1908). The
source for my estimate of the number of annual American Muslim pilgrims to Mecca
is the Saudi Arabian embassy: Telephone interview, 23 October 1998, Tarik Allagany,
information supervisor, Saudi Arabian Information Office, Washington, D.C.

Veteran's Memorial in Washington, D.C., closely simulate ritual practice at traditionally religious shrines. By the end of the 1990s, millions of visitors had left tens of thousands of artifacts and letters at that civic monument, just as Catholic pilgrims leave notes or crutches at healing shrines. As several scholars have noted, similar practices emerge at other U.S. tourist sites that claim secular status, including Graceland, Elvis Presley's Memphis home, where fans from across the country leave messages, flowers, and gifts during candle light vigils.[8]

But pilgrimage in the United States usually has been explicitly associated with religious traditions. American Indian peoples have long venerated certain natural and historical sites and returned regularly to

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[8] On quasi-religious sites such as battlefields and tourist spots, see Edward Tabor Linenthal, *Sacred Ground: Americans and Their Battlefields*, 2nd ed. (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1993); and John Sears, *Sacred Places: American Tourist Attractions in the Nineteenth Century* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989). The multiple types of shrines appear throughout the world, but some patterns emerge as we consider what has been most distinctive about U.S. shrines. First, with the exception of some American Indian shrines, U.S. pilgrimage sites are relatively recent when compared with those from Europe, the Middle East, or Asia. Second, perhaps because of its vigorous civil religion and its relative economic privilege, which allows its citizens to construct and visit more sites, the nation seems to have a greater number of quasi-religious nationalistic and tourist places. Third, shrines have been more central in some religious traditions (for example, Roman Catholicism and Hinduism) than others and, with some exceptions, those long-standing patterns have held in America. So Catholics, with as many as 360 religious sites, have built the most shrines on American soil. American Buddhists and Muslims, who have constructed shrines in Asia and the Middle East, have not yet transplanted that tradition because their numbers increased substantially only after the 1965 revision of U.S. immigration laws and these religious communities traditionally have constructed shrines on the tombs of holy persons or at the sites of historical events. That also explains a fourth pattern in the United States. Only religious movements that originated on the continent, like the Latter Day Saints or Mormons, can claim the American landscape as the site of their founding, so there are fewer commemorative, miraculous, and found-object shrines in the United States. In turn, Americans have built more imitative and identity shrines, which bridge for immigrants the homeland and the United States, a nation originally formed and continually transformed by migration.

perform prescribed rituals. So do many Roman Catholics, who es-
tablished their first pilgrimage site on lands that would become the
United States in 1620, when Spanish missionaries dedicated a small
chapel to Our Lady of La Leche at St. Augustine, Florida. And by the
1990s, Catholic pilgrims visited that site and more than 360 other sa-
cred places across the nation, including pilgrimage centers that develop
around reports of miracles or apparitions. Some new religious move-
ments also have consecrated sites as holy. Christian Scientists visit the
residences of founder Mary Baker Eddy and the monumental Mother
Church in Boston, while Latter-day Saints make journeys to regional
Mormon temples as well as key sites of historical significance in Mis-
souri and Utah. For example, Temple Square in Salt Lake City attracts
nearly five million annual visitors.[9]

Although they claim many fewer traditional sacred sites in the
United States than in their homeland, the post-1965 immigrants, who
have transplanted a variety of faiths, have constructed (or renovated)
thousands of places of worship. Some larger Hindu temples, Sikh gur-
dwaras, and Muslim mosques have functioned as local, regional, or
national pilgrimage sites for Asian and Middle Eastern immigrants
and their relatives. Some American Buddhist temples draw pilgrims,

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[9] Vine Deloria *God is Red*, 2nd ed. (Golden, Colorado: North American Press,
1992), 267-82. As Deloria notes, the state's power sometimes constrains Indian
peoples' ability to practice their faith because many have been displaced from
their traditional homelands or forbidden access to holy places on federal lands.
Nonetheless, Indian peoples still make round-trip religious journeys. On American
Indian sacred sites see Keith H. Basso, *Wisdom Sits in Places: Landscape and
Language among the Western Apache* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico
Press, 1996); and Klara Bonsack Kelley and Harris Francis, *Navajo Sacred Places*
(Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994). For a list and description of American
Catholic sites, see J. Anthony Moran, *Pilgrims' Guide to America: U.S. Catholic
Shrines and Centers of Devotion* (Huntington, Indiana: Our Sunday Visitor, 1992).
For brief but helpful overviews of LDS sites see Lloyd E. Hudman, "Historic Sites
and Tourism," in S. Kent Brown, Donald Q. Cannon, and Richard H. Jackson, eds.,
Historical Atlas of Mormonism (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1994), 138-39; and
Richard H. Jackson, "Historical Sites," in Daniel H. Ludlow, ed., *Encyclopedia of
Mormonism*, vol. 2 (New York: Macmillan, 1992), 592-95.

often from a single ethnic group and Buddhist sect. For example, in 1996 more than 110,000 devotees, many of them Chinese immigrants, took the guided tour at Southern California's Hsi Lai Temple, the largest Buddhist temple in the western hemisphere. The Jain Society of Metropolitan Chicago, which was the largest Jain center in North America when it opened in 1993, attracts both local Asian Indian immigrants, and devotees who travel greater distances. Hindu immigrants from India, and elsewhere, first dedicated two major temples (in Pittsburgh and Flushing) during the summer of 1977, and Hindu devotees have been especially successful in transplanting the ancient and vigorous Indian pilgrimage tradition since then. The first two temples, and the dozens consecrated since the 1970s, have attracted American pilgrims; and, as at many other religious and quasi-religious sites, new pilgrimage routes are constantly emerging in the United States.[10]

Protestant Pilgrims and Shrines: The American Methodist Case

One religious tradition is noticeably absent from this brief survey: Protestants. There has been little research on shrines and pilgrimage in the United States, and of the few studies that have appeared none explicitly and systematically considers Protestant pilgrimage practice. The presumption, as I indicated at the start, is that Protestants do not have shrines or make pilgrimages. And it is true that few American Protestant denominations have used the terms *shrine* and *pilgrimage* to describe their revered places or their religious practice, and many Protestants have felt uneasy about the Catholic preoccupation with pilgrimage centers. For some Protestants, talk about shrines or pilgrimage signals that the speaker has been seduced by dangerously sensual Catholic culture. However, while round-trip religious journeys have been less central for Protestant piety than for Catholic devotion, Amer-

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[10] On the pilgrimage sites of the post-1965 Asian immigrants (Jains, Hindus, Sikhs, and Buddhists) see Tweed and Prothero, ed., *Asian Religions in America*, 289-314, 315-34. For a guide to North American Hindu shrines and pilgrimage, see Marella L. Hanumadass, ed., *A Pilgrimage to Hindu Temples in North America* (Flushing: The Council of Hindu Temples of North America, 1994).

ica's children of the Reformation are less anomalous in this regard than many have assumed. Focusing on white U.S. Methodists in the twentieth century, I suggest that these mainline Protestants have sacralized sites and made religious journeys.

In most ways, they have done so despite their Methodist heritage, not because of it. The denomination's founder, John Wesley, sometimes offered qualified admiration for Catholic persons and practices. For instance, he praised Thomas à Kempis's *Imitation of Christ* in his journals and letters. And sometimes, as in his more eirenical 1749 *Letter to a Roman Catholic*, Wesley restrained his criticism of Catholics. More typically, as in *Popery Calmly Considered* and *A Caution against Bigotry*, he let loose a flurry of condemnations. Consider the latter sermon, delivered in 1750, where he described the Roman Catholic Church as "in many respects anti-scriptural and anti-Christian: a Church which we believe to be utterly false and erroneous in her doctrines, as well as dangerously wrong in her practice, guilty of gross superstition as well as idolatry..." Wesley found idolatry in many things Catholic — including the office of the papacy and the doctrine of transubstantiation. Yet, as one Methodist historian has argued, the founder saw idolatry "especially in the cult of images, in what he perceived to be the worship of the Virgin Mary, and in the offering of prayers to the saints." And, of course, these idolatrous paraliturgical practices flourished at Catholic shrines. For Wesley and other leading Methodists, then, Catholic pilgrimage culture — with its enshrining of images and petitioning of intercessors — was misguided.[11]

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[11] On Wesley's attitudes toward Catholicism, see David Butler, *Methodists and Papists: John Wesley and the Catholic Church in the Eighteenth Century* (London: Darton, Longman, and Todd, 1995). The passage from Wesley's sermon *A Caution against Bigotry* is quoted in that work (xiii). The historian quoted on the cult of images is also Butler: *Methodists and Papists*, 158. It is interesting to note that some of John Wesley's early critics condemned his views by comparing them with those of the Roman Catholic Church. In this view, both Methodists and Catholics were guilty of "enthusiasm." For example, see [George Lavington], *The Enthusiasm of Methodists and Papists Compar'd* (London: J. and P. Knapton, 1749). Wesley, annoyed by the

Homaging their heritage, and especially the longstanding suspicion of Catholic sacramentalism, Methodists have distanced themselves from some — although not all — shrines and pilgrimage. Yet to understand Methodist practice it is important to be precise about the nature and classification of shrines. To use my labels, then, U.S. Methodists usually have not established miraculous shrines, found-object shrines, or ex voto shrines, and they have consecrated imitative shrines only in the loosest sense of the term. Methodists fail to found these types of shrines, in part, because they continue to affirm the Wesleyan critique of Catholic images and saints, but the Reformation doctrine of a limited age of miracles also has shaped their practice. As one historian of Christianity has noted, the Reformers held that "miracles were essential for both the revelation of the Bible and the establishment of the Christian church, but after the completion of the scripture they ceased to occur." Applying this principle (which held among most English-speaking Protestants until 1930 and continued to have influence after that), if there are no more miracles, there can be no more miracle shrines established at the site of sacred healings and supernatural interventions. In turn, there can be no ex voto shrines built to express thanks for those interventions. Further, because Methodists wanted to distinguish themselves from the Catholic practice of enshrining saints, they did not develop a strong tradition of relic preservation or veneration. One Methodist divinity school exhibits John Wesley's death mask; another preserves George Whitfield's thumb and displays pieces of Wesley's coat. Yet with the possible exception of the World Methodist Building at Lake Junaluska, North Carolina, which one prominent Methodist historian playfully called "the Methodist Disneyland," the United Methodist Church has not encouraged popular reverence for those items or established a pilgrimage center to house them. In this

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comparison, responded. See John Telford, ed., *John Wesley's Letters*, vol. 3 (London: Epworth Press, 1931), 258ff.

sense, the presuppositions about Methodists, and other Protestants, are correct: they have rejected most kinds of shrines.[12]

American Methodists, however, have not eschewed all types of shrines: they have identified and visited *commemorative* shrines, sites that recall key historical events and transport pilgrims to religiously significant times. And these function as *identity* shrines since, for many Methodists, collective identity emerges from historical consciousness. As historian Russell Richey has argued persuasively, "Methodists have consistently turned to history when called upon to say who they were, to state purposes, to define themselves." This appeal to history first emerged from the practice of sharing conversion narratives, and it took root in the teaching and example of Methodism's founder, John Wesley, and its most influential American leader, Francis Asbury. Wesley advised his preachers to keep a journal, and he followed his own advice by preserving a personal record for over sixty years. Asbury had a similar historical impulse: as early as 1780 Asbury wrote in his *Journal* that he had been "collecting all the minutes of our Conferences in America to assist me in a brief history of the Methodists." And since 1787, *The Book of Discipline*, the regularly updated summary of Methodist doctrine and practice, has opened with an historical preface. In that central text and in other contexts, when Methodists have been asked to explain who they are, they often have told stories about their denomination's past. For this reason, it is not surprising that

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[12] Robert Bruce Mullin, *Miracles and the Modern Religious Imagination* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996), 1. The exhibit that includes one of four copies of Wesley's death mask is "John Wesley: Death and Remembrance, 1791-1991," Duke Divinity School Library, Duke University, Durham, North Carolina. On Wesley's coat and Whitfield's thumb, see Colleen McDannell's analysis of Drew University's Methodist Archives in *Material Christianity* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995), 42-45. The reference to "Methodist Disneyland" surfaced in a telephone interview with K. R., a prominent and informed Methodist historian, 4 November 1998. Official Methodist documents even have used the term *relic* to describe the artifacts housed at Lake Junaluska. For example, *The Book of Discipline of the United Methodist Church: 1968* (Nashville: The Methodist Publishing House, 1968), 445.

U.S. Methodists would consecrate commemorative shrines. That practice is an extension of their longstanding inclination toward historical self-consciousness. And their commemorative shrines, like the *Book of Discipline's* historical prefaces, construct collective identity by linking adherents with a sacred heritage.[13]

Methodists at European and British Shrines

British and American Methodists have found their heritage preserved at Continental and British sites that function as commemorative shrines. For example, John Rhodes's *Methodist Tourists on the Continent* narrates a journey the author took with a group of British Methodists, who left London on 13 September 1875. They traveled to Catholic and Protestant sites in Paris, Basil, Zürich, Milan, Venice, Bologna, Florence, Rome, and Naples. At Catholic sites, Rhodes reported ambivalent responses. At times, he and his fellow Methodists found themselves moved by the beauty of paintings and cathedrals; more often they were repelled by Catholic excess and reminded of Catholic superstitions. Sometimes Rhodes strained to avoid praising things Catholic, as when he recounted his ambivalent reaction to the Vatican. On the one hand, Rhodes acknowledged that it is "so splen-

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[13] Russell E. Richey, "History as Bearer of Denominational Identity," in Russell E. Richey, Kenneth E. Rowe, and Jean Miller Schmidt, eds., *Perspectives on American Methodism: Interpretive Essays* (Nashville: Kingswood Books, 1993), 496. Asbury's journal was quoted in Edwin Schell, *History of Northeastern Jurisdictional Historical Concerns* (n. p: Northeastern Jurisdictional Commission on Archives and History, United Methodist Church, 1976), 1. On the historical prefaces in *The Book of Disciplines*, and their role in creating denominational identity, see Russell E. Richey, "History in the Discipline," in Thomas A. Langford, ed., *Doctrine and Theology in the United Methodist Church* (Nashville: Kingswood, 1991), 190-202. In the latter essay, Richey shows Methodists' distinctive historical focus by a comparison with two sister denominations, Episcopalians and Presbyterians. Neither introduces itself historically; neither the Episcopal nor Presbyterian constitutions, initially or in later years, appeal to history. Neither introduces polity with narrative (193). For the historical prefaces in the *Books of Discipline* consult any edition. For an interesting early example see *The Doctrines and Discipline of the Methodist Episcopal Church* (New York: T. Mason and G. Lane, 1836), 7-8.

didly furnished that the Vatican may be justly described as the most imposing palace in the world." On the other hand, Michelangelo's frescoes in the Sistine Chapel failed to move him. Speaking of the famous *Last Judgment*, Rhodes reported that "for my own part I was greatly disappointed with this picture. I could see nothing either in its design or execution that had a pleasing effect."[14]

Rhodes's party also journeyed to sites on the Continent that commemorate important people and events in the history of the Reformation and early Protestantism. At these sites, Rhodes was less ambivalent. As with other pilgrims traveling to the birthplace of their religious tradition, Rhodes expressed only awe and appreciation at these Protestant historical sites. Sometimes this Methodist pilgrim simultaneously managed to celebrate Protestantism and condemn Catholicism, as when he recounted a visit to the cathedral in Zürich where the Swiss Reformer Ulrich Zwingli in 1518 had "denounced the superstitions which then reigned supreme in the Papal Church, and declared that the true and only source of salvation was to be found in Christ." In this passage and many others the travel narrative reveals that, for Rhodes and his fellow Methodists, the journey had religious significance. It was, in important ways, a pilgrimage.[15]

Some Methodists have been even more straightforward in acknowledging that travel can be pilgrimage. Consider one guidebook that went through three editions between 1951 and 1976: Frank Baker's *The Methodist Pilgrim in England*. Baker, a British Methodist, did not offer a travel account like Rhodes's nineteenth-century narrative. Rather, as Baker relates in the introduction, the volume arose from a suggestion "that our overseas visitors would appreciate some information about the historic shrines of British Methodism." Baker knew overseas visitors would appreciate information about British shrines because he met and guided those visitors himself. As Baker recalls in the preface to the third edition, which was published in the United States, many

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[14] John Rhodes, *Methodist Tourists on the Continent* (Bolton, England: Tillotson, 1876), 60.

[15] Rhodes, *Methodist Tourists*, 9.

of the travelers who inspired Baker's labors, and followed him from one sacred site to another, were Americans. For example, in 1970, 195 Methodists journeyed to their tradition's British birthplace on the Baltimore Historical Society's United Methodist Heritage Tour. And, as one of those Baltimore Methodists reported several years later, "because of the success of the venture... similar pilgrimages have since been made by thousands of American Methodists." The geographically-arranged book that resulted from the tourists' prompting offers detailed information about landmarks in England: among them Oxford, where the Wesleys "were educated and made their first tentative experiments as Methodists"; London, "where their hearts were warmed and the Methodist societies came into being"; Bristol, "the strategic centre for the spread of Methodism across the Atlantic"; and the Wesley's birthplace in Epworth, which Baker describes as "the Mecca of the Methodist pilgrim."[16]

Note that here (as throughout the book) Baker self-consciously used *shrine* and *pilgrim*, despite some Methodists' inherited discomfort with these terms because of their Catholic associations. Baker, and some other Methodists, wanted to reclaim the religious terms, however, since they conveyed important meanings. For historically-minded Methodists, like Baker and the Americans he introduced to England, *shrine* evokes a sense of sacrality in ways that secular alternatives, like *tourist site*, do not. These Methodists, then, traded on the term's more traditional religious associations while simultaneously distinguishing their practice from Catholic superstition. And Methodists could justify the use of the word *shrine* because it referred only to commemorative sites. Standing vigil at John Wesley's ancestral home or the place of his conversion is legitimate for the spiritual descendants of Luther, Wesley, and Asbury. After all, Methodist pilgrims do not petition John Wesley to intercede for them; nor do they venerate images of Francis

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[16] Frank Baker, *The Methodist Pilgrim in England*, 3rd ed. (1951; Rutland, Vermont: Academy Books, 1976), vii, viii, 11. The quotation from the traveler, and other information on that 1970 pilgrimage, is in Schell, *Northeastern Jurisdictional Historical Concerns*, 26.

Asbury. They do not report apparitions or seek healings. Methodists do not crawl up shrine steps on their hands and knees or leave wax limbs and wooden crutches by the saint's altar, as Catholic pilgrims do. Methodists who use *shrine* to describe significant sites find comfort in their belief that there is no Catholic superstition at British Methodism's commemorative sites — only shared denominational memory.

Methodist Shrines in the U.S.

Methodists also have designated commemorative sites in the United States, and they have used the same language — appealing to terms like *shrine* and *pilgrimage*. By 1952, national Methodist organizations had made "a plea for recognition and support of shrines." By 1964, the Association of Methodist Historical Societies (AMHS), a federation of the Jurisdictional, Annual Conference, and other historical societies of the Methodist Church, had recommended that the General Conference designate twelve structures and sites as "Methodist shrines." These were, as the *Book of Discipline* for 1964 indicated, a building or site "linked with significant events and outstanding personalities in the origin and development of American Methodism as to have distinctive historical interest and value for the denomination as a whole..."[17]

Two years later George H. Jones drew on that initial list, and information about other historically important sites, to produce *The Methodist Tourist Guidebook.* That volume, prepared for the observance of the bicentennial of American Methodism, fulfilled the bicentennial committee's charge — "to provide information on Methodist sites and shrines across the United States." It described many "landmarks" all across the country, and the twelve "national Methodist shrines." Those included Epworth Chapel on St. Simons Island, Georgia, where the Wesleys established a congregation during their difficult American journey of the 1730s; and Rehoboth Church in Union,

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[17] Schell, *Northeastern Jurisdictional Historical Concerns*, 11. *Doctrines and Discipline of the Methodist Church: 1964* (Nashville: Methodist Publishing House, 1964), 492. On that page of the 1964 volume the list of the twelve original "Methodist shrines" also appears.

West Virginia, where Francis Asbury conducted three conferences and presided at the first ordination east of the Alleghenies. The 1966 guidebook distinguished these twelve places by indicating in capital letters in the text "NATIONAL METHODIST SHRINE." Both the font and the word signaled to potential travelers that these sites held a special place in the hearts of American Methodists. There pilgrims stepped on holy ground.[18]

The ground was holy not because miraculous healings or apparitions sanctified it, but because the site bridged the denominational past. In 1968, when the Methodist Church and the Evangelical United Brethren Church merged to form the United Methodist Church, the new denomination established the Commission on Archives and History. This body, the successor of the AMHS and the Historical Society of the Evangelical United Brethren Church, continued efforts to preserve denominational history. That meant identifying three types of places: "landmarks," "sites," and "historical shrines." The Committee reserved the last term for locales with the greatest historical importance and national significance. And at the time of the union, that meant the twelve sites previously identified by the Methodists Church and the two recognized by the Evangelical United Brethren Church.[19]

As the years passed, the Commission recommended that the General Conference designate other historical shrines. For example, the 1970 Special Session of the General Conference accepted the recommendation of the Commission on Archives and History and named Whitaker's Chapel in rural North Carolina the fifteenth "National His-

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[18] George H. Jones, *The Methodist Tourist Guidebook* (Nashville: published in cooperation with The Association of Methodist Historical Societies by Tidings, 1966), 3. For another denominational statement on "shrines," see Albea Godbold, "Shrines, Landmarks, and Sites of the United Methodist Church, U.S.A.," in Nolan B. Harmon, ed., *The Encyclopedia of World Methodism*, vol. 2 (Nashville: The United Methodist Publishing House, 1974), 2150. For an accessible overview of American Methodist history see James E. Kirby, Russell E. Richey, and Kenneth E. Rowe, *The Methodists*, Denominations in America, Number 8 (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1996).

[19] *The Book of Discipline of the United Methodist Church: 1968* (Nashville: Methodist Publishing House, 1968), 445-51.

toric United Methodist Shrine." The Commission's official recommendation is illuminating:

> Because the North Carolina Conference of the Methodist Protestant Church was organized in Whitaker's Chapel, because it was the first Methodist Protestant conference of any kind, even antedating the organization of the Methodist Protestant General Conference, because the present building has pilgrimage appeal, and because Whitaker's Chapel was long regarded as the main historical shrine of one of the branches of American Methodism which united in 1939 to form the Methodist Church, it is recommended for designation as the fifteenth Historical Shrine of the United Methodist Church.[20]

Several phrases and principles are noteworthy here. Notice again the explicit use of phrases such as "*pilgrimage* appeal" and "historical *shrine*." Note also the appeal to the criteria, which are spelled out in *The Book of Discipline*, for the designation of national shrines: they must be buildings, locations, or structures that are specifically related to significant events, developments, or personalities in the overall history of The United Methodist Church or its antecedents. It is not enough to claim, for example, that Francis Asbury preached there — and he did preach at Whitaker's Chapel three times. Asbury, the tireless itinerant, preached almost everywhere. More than that is needed for the Commission to grant shrine status. The site, like Whitaker's Chapel, must return pilgrims to sacred time, to an event that planted or cultivated the seeds of American Methodism.[21]

These commemorative American shrines, whose number had swelled to thirty-eight when the 1996 *Book of Discipline* appeared (see Appendix A), construct Methodist identity. The Commission's most recent shrine guidebook, the successor to Jones's *Methodist Tourist Guidebook*, opens by inviting readers to "look to the rock from which you were hewn..." It then introduces some of the holiest sites of American Methodism in Georgia. The Commission quotes the famous

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[20] "Historic Locations Recently Recognized," *Methodist History* (October 1970), 36. See also William K. Quick, "Sunday's Ceremony to Mark Whitaker's Chapel as Shrine," *North Carolina Christian Advocate* 115, 8 October 1970, 8-9.

[21] *The Book of Discipline of the United Methodist Church: 1996* (Nashville: United Methodist Publishing House, 1996), 582-83.

passage from John Wesley's journal for 6 February 1736: "About eight in the morning we first set foot on American ground. It was a small, uninhabited island, over against Tybee. Mr Oglethorpe led us to a rising ground, where we all kneeled to give thanks." With this passage Wesley records his arrival on American soil, the tourbook reminds pious Methodists, and "today a marker on Cockspur Island commemorates that event." As I noted at the start of this essay, that marker is part of one of the most important commemorative shrines, John Wesley's American Parish, in Savannah Georgia, which also includes the sites of Wesley's first service, his first parsonage, and the Town Hall, where he held regular services. Wesley had left England because General James Oglethorpe, who founded Savannah, had invited him to serve as Georgia's chaplain, and the British Methodist stayed twenty-one months. An unsuccessful missionary to the local Indians and an unsuccessful suitor to a local woman, Wesley left disappointed. Yet, as the tourbook reminds pilgrims, "his American sojourn was an important part of his spiritual and intellectual development." And it was an important episode in the history of American Methodism, as the historical markers, published pamphlets, and guided tours at the Savannah sites help Methodists recall.[22]

John Wesley's American Parish, and the thirty-seven other commemorative shrines, attract contemporary Methodist pilgrims, although it is impossible to know exactly how many since the denomination does not keep such records. But my research indicates that most locales annually attract at least several thousand pilgrims, much less than most U.S. Catholic shrines but more than most scholars might have guessed. The administrator at Philadelphia's St. George's Church, the oldest Methodist house of worship in continual use in America and the site of Asbury's first American sermon, reports that the church draws

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[22] *A Traveler's Guide to the Heritage Landmarks of the United Methodist Church* (Madison, New Jersey: General Commission on Archives and History, 1997), 1. The pamphlet distributed at the site: "John Wesley's American Parish, Savannah, 1736-1737," folded color brochure, no date, the Savannah District United Methodist Office and Trinity United Methodist Church, Savannah, Georgia.

approximately 3,000 to 4,000 pilgrims each year. Records of Trinity United Methodist Church, one of the seven sites connected with John Wesley's American Parish in Savannah, suggest that locale drew more than 5,000 visitors between January and September in 1997. Tour registrations show that those Methodist pilgrims came from thirty-seven states and fourteen foreign countries. Other sites report similar figures. Lovely Lane Museum in Baltimore is near the site where Lovely Lane Chapel stood. There in 1784 the chapel hosted the famous Christmas Conference where the new denomination, the Methodist Episcopal Church, was born, and where John Wesley's emissary consecrated Francis Asbury as "general superintendent" of the Methodists in America. The Baltimore museum reports 4,000 annual visitors, and more take the self-guided tour of the nearby Robert Strawbridge House.[23]

Shrine or Landmark? Methodism's Dual Impulses

Mention of the Lovely Lane Museum and the Robert Strawbridge House raises vividly an issue that American Methodists have faced in recent decades: Since the most widely known and religiously resonant terms for spiritual journeys and sacred places carry unwanted Catholic associations, how should Methodists understand and describe their own inclination to identify and visit holy sites? For more than

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[23] I invited site administrators to estimate annual visitors and searched available printed records. This method is flawed, of course, but it yielded the best figures available. The estimate from St. George's Church came from Brian McCloskey, church administrator, telephone interview, 3 November 1998. The estimate for Trinity United Methodist Church, a part of John Wesley's American Parish, came from the Reverend Ralph Bailey, "Composite Report of 1997 Activities," Trinity United Methodist Church, Savannah. Georgia, page 6. The figures for Lovely Lane Museum and the Robert Strawbridge House are from: telephone interview, the Reverend Edwin Schell, 3 November 1998. These estimates of visitors suggest both that Methodists do value pilgrimage, but they also confirm presuppositions that Catholics cherish it even more. As one cultural geographer has calculated, many Catholic shrines in the United States draw hundreds of thousands of annual visitors. On feast days or holy days, some Catholic sites attract more pilgrims in a single day than some Methodist locales draw in a year. See Gisbert Rinschede, "Catholic Pilgrimage Places in the United States," in Rinschede and Bhardwaj, eds., *Pilgrimage in the United States*, 63-136.

four decades American Methodists officially designated hundreds of pilgrimage centers, and regularly used the word *shrine* to describe the most venerated sites. However, while reaffirming their commitment to identifying and visiting historically significant places, in 1993 the Shrines and Landmarks Committee began to consider a change in the terms they used. The Minutes for the 17 September meeting indicate that the members considered "Lasley's memorandum." After attending an earlier meeting where members had expressed worries about the "confusions" introduced by the term *shrine*, the Reverend Joseph W. Lasley wrote a letter to the committee's chair. "I got to thinking that we could call them 'heritage landmarks,' and I was surprised to find that my letter was distributed to others there, and it was approved at the next meeting." That memorandum did not include any specific mention of the Catholic issue, but he and several other members present "voiced concerns" about that. Lasley wanted the change in terminology, he later reported, "because the shrines we had were not the same as those in the Roman Catholic tradition. There are no bones or saints at our shrines..." Others agreed. In 1995, at a full session of the Commission, the change was proposed. It won approval, and next year the advance edition of the *Daily Christian Advocate*, which appeared before the 1996 General Conference, printed the Commission on Archives and History's proposal to replace "historic shrines" with "heritage landmarks." That petition was approved, and the terminological changes now appear in the denomination's *Book of Discipline*.[24]

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[24] *Daily Christian Advocate*, Advance Edition I, The United Methodist Church General Conference 1996, vol. 1 (Nashville: The General Conference of the United Methodist Church, 1996), 907. *Book of Discipline: 1996*, 582-83. According to General Commission on Archives and History records available to the public, the issue of the name change for historic shrines first arose 17 September 1993, during a plenary session of the committee in charge of Shrines and Landmarks. The following year, at the annual meeting, the Shrines and Landmarks Committee reported that they would be ready to present a change to *The Book of Discipline* at the next general meeting. In 1995, at a full session of the Commission, the disciplinary change was suggested. Minutes, Shrines and Landmarks Committee, 17 September 1993, Methodist

The shift in language has altered little, either among the Commission members or Methodist pilgrims. The Commission continues to consider proposals from local sites that want special recognition, and some Methodist laypeople continue to make round-trip journeys to places that capture denominational memory and create shared identity. And they continue to take home mementos, as pilgrims always have done: from postcards and pamphlets to Francis Asbury coffee mugs and John Wesley porcelain busts.

Nonetheless, most changes in language encode desires and convey meanings, and this one reveals the complexity of Methodist attitudes about sacred places. Consider, for example, the response to this change among caretakers of Baltimore's Lovely Lane Museum and Robert Strawbridge *House*. The Commission's 1998 list of American Methodism's thirty-eight most venerated places describes the residence of Strawbridge, one of America's pioneer Methodist preachers, as "the Robert Strawbridge Log House." However, challenging the authority of the Commission on Archives and History, and the mandates of the 1996 *Book of Discipline*, local Methodist caretakers of Strawbridge's Baltimore residence continue to call it a *shrine*. One of those caretakers is the Reverend Edwin Schell, executive secretary of the regional Methodist historical society and former member of the Commission on Archives and History, who debated the name change at the 1995 meeting. Schell recalled that "one of the brothers argued that the word *shrine* made people think of Catholic shrines, and so we should change the term." Schell dissented. For Schell, the change of language was very unfortunate. He prefers *shrine* and rejects *landmark* because "the new language makes it a more secular designation." The Methodist minister wants to signal that the site is holy. Undeterred by

Archives, Drew University, Madison, New Jersey. Minutes, Plenary Session, General Commission on Archives and History, 25 August 1995, Methodist Archives, Drew University, Madison, New Jersey. Because the records do not describe the origin of the name change or preserve the ensuing debate, I turned to oral history. I quote here from an interview: Telephone interview, the Reverend Joseph W. Lasley, 10 November 1998.

the prescriptions of the national organization, then, Schell and others
at the Lovely Lane Museum resist the change: "We still call the Robert
Strawbridge Shrine by that name."[25]

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[25] The General Commission on Archives and History, "The Heritage Landmarks
of United Methodism, 1997-2000," typescript, Methodist Archives, Drew University,
Madison, New Jersey. The minutes available to researchers do not suggest any clear
reason for the change in terminology. There are only two hints in the surviving written
record. Minutes of the Shrines and Landmarks Committee suggest that the initial 1993
discussion related to a memo from one of the Committee's members: "reference was
made to [Joseph] Lasley's memorandum." The minutes from the plenary session of the
General Commission on Archives and History for 25 August 1995, when the change
was debated and approved, suggest that the change "was developed by the Shrines
and Landmarks Committee in response to confusion about the meaning of the terms
'historic shrine' and 'historic landmark.' " Minutes, Shrines and Landmarks Commit-
tee, General Commission on Archives and History, 17 September 1993, Methodist
Archives, Drew University, Madison, New Jersey. Minutes, Plenary Session, General
Commission on Archives and History, 25 August 1995, Methodist Archives, Drew
University, Madison, New Jersey. Several members present at the plenary session
confirmed that the Reverend Edwin Schell dissented: Natasha Whitton, administrative
assistant, General Commission on Archives and History, letter to the author, 4 Novem-
ber 1998; Telephone interview, the Reverend Joseph W. Lasley, 10 November 1998.
To complete the record, I also interviewed Schell on the cause of the terminologi-
cal change, and his reactions to it: Telephone interview, the Reverend Edwin Schell,
3 November 1998. By the late 1997, the United Methodist Church's Commission on
Archives and History had listed 357 places in its register of historic sites. Continuing
a practice from the 1950s but altering the terminology, the Commission distinguishes
between *historic sites* and *heritage landmarks*. The latter, which the denomination
used to call "historic shrines," retain the same sense of distinctiveness, even sacral-
ity. The Commission's 1997 *Traveler's Guide*, the descendant of the earlier pamphlets
on "national shrines," lists thirty-eight heritage landmarks, which constitutes 10 per-
cent of the recognized historic sites. And the guidelines the Commission distributes to
churches and groups applying for landmark status mention three primary standards for
inclusion: 1) "A place's *significance* to the history of the United Methodist Church or
its antecedents is of utmost importance;" 2) "Heritage Landmarks are often associated
with *specific persons* important to the history of the United Methodist Church and its
predecessors;" 3) "Many Heritage Landmarks note a *first*." "Guidelines: Applying for
Heritage Landmark Status," two-page typescript, June 1996, General Commission on
Archives and History, Madison, New Jersey.

The 1996 General Conference did not see passionate or extended debate about how to describe valued historical sites, and Lovely Lane's resistance has had little national impact. Still, it illumines two, sometimes contradictory, impulses that survive in contemporary U.S. Methodism: a desire to sanctify historical sites because of their importance for denominational identity and a concern to avoid endorsing the excesses of Catholic paraliturgical devotions. Schell, and some other American Methodists, are less troubled than Lasley by the Catholic associations and more concerned to highlight sites' sacrality. Nonetheless, as the General Conference's 1996 decision indicates, the Wesleyan suspicion of Catholic devotionalism continues.

Because of that enduring suspicion, United Methodists consecrate only commemorative sites, historical locales that help Methodists explain themselves to themselves. And since Protestant identity always has involved *protest*ing — defining self in opposition to the other, namely Roman Catholicism — Methodist sacred sites and pilgrimage practices continue to avoid any explicit association with the "idolatry" that Wesley condemned. There is no evidence that any Methodist pilgrim to John Wesley's American Parish has prayed to Wesley for a miraculous cure and then left crutches by the altar to signal her gratitude for the founder's supernatural intercession. In the Reverend Lasley words, "there are no bones or saints at our shrines."

However, that does not mean that Methodists, or all other Protestants, are as spiritually distinctive as believers imagine or scholars presuppose. Whether John Wesley's American Parish, St. George's Church, and Lovely Lane Museum are called "heritage landmarks" or "historic shrines," for a small but significant proportion of Methodists they function like traditional pilgrimage centers, and spiritually motivated round-trip travel remains a notable feature of contemporary Methodist piety. In this sense, United Methodists share much more with other people of faith than *The Book of Discipline's* recently secularized language indicates. They have something in common with other American pilgrims — even white-clad U.S. Muslims circumambulating the Ka'aba in Mecca and Latino Catholics fingering holy dirt at El Santuario de Chimayó. However the General Conference elects to

describe the sites or the journeys, American Methodists continue to make pilgrimages and consecrate shrines — even if they also continue to mark the boundaries between their faith and others.

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APPENDIX A

The Thirty-Eight Historic Shrines or Heritage Landmarks of the United Methodist Church (1996)*
Note: # indicates the original twelve sites designated as "historic shrines" before the 1968 merger that formed the United Methodist Church. These were the twelve listed in Doctrines and Discipline of the Methodist Church, *1964 and George H. Jones's 1966* The Methodist Tourist Guidebook.

Sacred Site	Location	Designated
#Acuff's Chapel	Kingsport, TN	1968
Albright Memorial Chapel	Kleinfeltersville, PA	1968
Asbury Manual Labor School	Ft. Mitchell, AL	1984
#Baratt's Chapel	Frederica, DE	1968
Bethune-Cookman College	Daytona Beach, FL	1984
Bishop John Seybert and Flat Rock Cluster	Flat Rock and Bellevue, OH	1992
Boehm's Chapel	Willow Street, PA	1984
Cokesbury College	Abingdon, MD	1984
Cox U M Church	Hallowell, ME	1992
Deadwood Cluster	Deadwood, SD	1984
#Edward Cox House	Bluff City, TN	1968
First Evangelical Assoc.	New Berlin, PA	1988
First U M Church	Johnstown, PA	1996
#Green Hill House	Louisburg, NC	1968

(Continued)

Sacred Site	Location	Designated
Hanby House	Westerville, OH	1988
#John Street Church	New York City	1968
J. W.'s American Parish	Savannah, GA	1976
Keywood Marker	Glade Spring, VA	1988
Lovely Lane Chapel	Baltimore, MD	1972
McMahan's Chapel	Bronson, TX	1972
Methodist Hospital	Brooklyn, NY	1972
#Old McKendree Chapel	Jackson, MO	1968
Old Otterbein Church	Baltimore, MD	1968
#Old Stone Church	Leesburg, VA	1968
Organization of Methodist Episcopal Church, South	Louisville, KY	1984
Peter Cartwright U M Church	Pleasant Plains, IL	1976
#Rehobeth Church	Union, WV	1968
#Robert Strawbridge's Log House	New Windsor, MD	1968
Rusterville Cluster	Rusterville, TX	1988
#St. George's Church	Philadelphia, PA	1968
#St. Simon's Island	Brunswick, GA	1968
Wesley Foundation	Champaign, IL	1996
Town of Oxford	Oxford, GA	1972
Wesleyan College Cluster	Macon, GA	1992
Whitaker's Chapel	Enfield, NC	1972
Willamette Mission	Salem, OR	1992
#Wyandot Indian Mission	Upper Sandusky, OH	1968
Zoar U M Church	Philadelphia, PA	1984

Sources: Doctrines and Discipline of the Methodist Church (Nashville: Methodist Publishing House, 1964), 492; *The Book of Discipline of the United Methodist Church* (Nashville: United Methodist Publishing House, 1996), 583–84; and *A Traveler's Guide to the Heritage Landmarks of the United Methodist Church* (Madison, New Jersey: General Commission on Archives and History, 1997).

NAIVE SENSUALISM, *DOCTA IGNORANTIA.*
TIBETAN LIBERATION THROUGH THE SENSES

JOANNA TOKARSKA-BAKIR

Summary

Liberations through the senses are the soteriological practices of the Tibetan Buddhists, a counterpart to and an elaboration on what in Europe is occasionally described, somewhat contemptuously, as "rattling off one's prayers". Linked with folk beliefs and rituals and labelled "naive sensualism" in European ethnographic terminology, Tibetan "liberation through senses" are all those religious behaviours (as well as related sacred objects) — such as listening to and repeating *mantras*, circumambulation of *stūpas*, looking at sacred images, tasting relics, smelling and touching sacred substances — which are accompanied by a belief that sensual contact with a sacred object (sculpted figure, painting, *mandala*, *stūpa*, holy man, tree, mount, book, substance, etc.) can give one hope and even certainty of achieving liberation. This study argues against ethnological conclusion, classifying such a kind of behaviour as a typical example of non-reflective folk-religiousness. The text is concerned with an in-depth interpretation of "liberations through the senses." The soteriological idea of endless repetition, associated with the process of destroying the discursive consciousness, is projected on the background of comparative religion. Subsequently, the full soteriological cycle, beginning with rattling off prayers and ending with "a borderline experience," is traced in the Tibetan and other religious materials.

One of the aims of this text on the little known Tibetan religious practices, termed as "liberation through the senses" boils down to the sentence by the Polish writer, Czesław Miłosz: "It doesn't matter whether he knows what he serves:/ Who serves best doesn't always understand".[1]

"Liberation through the senses" comprises all these religious practises — and the sacred things they are related to — hearing, sight, taste,

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[1] C. Miłosz, *Love*, from: *Rescúe* (1945), transl. by C. Miłosz, in: *Collected Poems 1931-1987*, Penguin 1988, p. 50.

smell and touch, coupled with the belief that coming into contact with
a sacred thing (a monument, a painting, a mandala, a *stūpa*, a holy
man, a tree, a mountain, a book, etc.) inspires hope or even guaran-
tees liberation. In European ethnographic terminology, these practises
are attributed to popular religiosity and labeled as "naive sensualism."
Bhutan's national palladium-thangka, a big painting on cloth partially
embroided in silk and representing the Indian yogin Padmasambhava,
called in Tibet Gu ru Rin po che, 'The Precious Teacher', who in-
troduced Buddhism to Tibet in the 8th century, is called "liberation
through seeing". The imprints of his feet, hands and back left in the Hi-
malayan grottoes in which he meditated also carried this name. Com-
ing into contact with ancient so-called treasure-texts (Tib. *gTer ma*),
books hidden, according to tradition, by Padmasambhava and his dis-
ciples, endows liberation through seeing, touching or hearing. Sources
emphasize it is enough "just" to see these holy relics in order to achieve
liberation.

No "inner senses" are involved. Gu ru Rin po che's blessing
can become effective only through man's simple exoteric sight and
also through hearing, taste, touch and memory. Pilgrim's guidebooks
emphasize the soteriological power of simple sensory contact: "Pray
here, for these represent the liberation of sentient beings through
the power of sight, hearing, memory and touch."[2] What Europeans
grumble about or do in secret, Tibetans do not hesitate to get involved
in openly, saying that the activities we laugh at, such as prayer
pattering, *stūpa* circumambulation, speed *mantra* chanting, drinking,
eating sacred food and touching sacred objects, guarantee liberation.

Western readers came across the term "liberations through the
senses" in 1927 when W.Y. Evans-Wentz[3] published the first English
translation of the text known as *The Tibetan Book of the Dead*,

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[2] E. Bernbaum, *Way to Shambhala*, New York 1989, p. 278, n. 21; 172.

[3] W.Y. Evans-Wentz, *The Tibetan Book of The After-Death Experiences on the
Bardo Plane, according to Lama Kazi Dawa Samdup's English Rendering*, Oxford
1968 [1927].

later referred to as TBD.[4] The text, whose original title is the *Bar do thos grol chen mo* or *The Great Liberation Through Hearing in the Bardo* [the state between death and rebirth], is the classic example of liberation through the senses. This specific aspect of Tibetan soteriology has never been dealt with in a systematic way by any of the numerous works on the TBD (published for over seventy years). The hermetic character of the teachings in the Tibetan doctrine of eschatology, the unparalleled complexity of symbolics and its exotic character, have successfully diverted research from what is hidden in the obvious title. Meanwhile, the soteriological path indicated by liberation through the senses appears to be of fundamental significance for the Tibetan religiosity of ordinary people possesing an unusual spiritual imagination.

To Europeans, the very term "liberation through the senses" is odd, let alone the idea of using the senses in soteriological research. Classical antiquity inculcated in Europeans the belief that "touching is shameful" (Aristotle), thus assuring them of an insoluble conflict between the body and the soul. To some extent, this conflict grew stronger with the advent of Christian times, in defiance of the dogma of incarnation and the concept of resurrection. "For if someone wants to become a meditator, who takes a spiritual point of view and looks into his inner self but is sure he should hear, see, taste, smell and touch (. . .), then he is entirely wrong and acts contrary to natural order."[5] This view, voiced in the 14th-century anonymous writing, *The Cloud of Unknowing*, can be regarded as representative of European *sensus communis*. Europeans may tolerate the idea of resorting to the aid of the senses in a bid for salvation only when they give it the metaphorical sense of opening the "inner senses" Christian mystics used to tell

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[4] English translation of TBD always after Chogyam Trungpa and F. Fremantle, *The Tibetan Book of the Dead. The Great Liberation Through Hearing in the Bardo, by Guru Rinpoche According to Karma Lingpa* [*Bar do thos grol*], Boulder 1975, p. XI.

[5] [Anonymus] *Obłok niewiedzy* ['The Cloud of Unknowing'], transl. by W. Ungolt, Poznań 1986, p. 31.

about: "When you disappear in yourself for the will and senses of your own 'self', then eternal hearing, sight and speech will open for you, and you will see and hear God through yourself" (J. Böhme). Does Tibetan "liberation through the senses" refer to the same mystical sensorium? I will seek to answer the question in this paper.

Writing about different paths leading to the sacred, Mircea Eliade opposes easier ones, such as "*mantra*, prayers and pilgrimage" to more difficult ones, such as "gnosis, asceticism and yoga."[6] His view reflects a classic division (in ethnology and religious sciences) into little and great, low and high, popular and elite traditions. This frequently criticized historical differentiation is repeatedly recalled when one thinks of liberation through the senses. Its secret criterion is the role played by various forms of self-consciousness in a given religious practice and the importance attached to the independence of *cogito* in European philosophical tradition. Writing is often but groundlessly indicated as the key criterion in differentiating between low and high culture,[7] little and great, direct and indirect traditions and even "cognitive styles" (Jack Goody).

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[6] M. Eliade, *Joga. Nieśmiertelność i wolność* ['Yoga. Immortality and Freedom', transl. by B. Baranowski], Warszawa 1984, p. 212.

[7] Compare, e. g. Wilhelm Halbfass's critique of E. Geller's article "High and Low Culture in Europe and Elsewhere," [in: *Europa i co z tego wynika. Rozmowy w Castel Gandolfo 1985*, vol. 2, Warszawa 1990, p. 328] in which Geller differentiates between high and low culture, strictly on the basis of literacy factor. Halbfass claims this is a total misunderstanding, at least in reference to Indian tradition: "From the point of view of Brahminist orthodoxy, any written tradition will, in some way, belong to low culture because what was subject to the strictest codification had for hundreds of years been reserved for oral tradition. The most sacred and intensely normative texts were oral; you could apply to them all that you ascribe to written texts. (...) Techniques far surpassing all that could be possible in reference to manuscripts, have been used to ensure genuine oral tradition. Climate and other factors contributed to the destruction of manuscripts; the most ancient texts, namely Vedas, were preserved more carefully than all that was expressed in writing. The Hindus became familiar with writing early and even though they had known how to write for a long time, writing was not put into use for hundreds of years. Even in late Hinduism, original texts were preserved by word of mouth. This practice, under Islam, led to some misunderstandings between

We will see that liberation through the senses refers to an entirely different "level of intellect", to its "faculty" other than the one whose synonyms are consciousness and writing. Obviously, this faculty is not reason as *ratio* but surely mind/intellect[8] or something which one can experience, although the nature of this cognition is not reduced to consciously controlled cognition. Liberation through the senses is the example of cognition-not-through-discursive-consciousness. It is striking to see how we object to this term and even more to the term "cognition through unconsciousness." We might be touching upon one of the major European prejudices that associates cognition exclusively with consciousness while equating unconsciousness with ignorance. Tibetans' religious practice, especially liberation through the senses, points to a different approach to the issue.

This is clearly seen in the example of "the ways letters are used." In liberation through the senses, letters do not function, according to Theuth, as "a specific for the memory and for the wit" (Plato's *Phaedrus*, 274C ff.) or as an instrument of preserving the discursive content, but rather as a magical medium, *sacramentale*. Writing exists only as a *rheme*[9] in liberation through sight, touch or taste; man who achieves

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Muslims and the adherents of Hinduism because the former did not want to give Hinduism the status of a «religion of the Book»."

[8] Tibetan terminology for the "mind/intellect/consciousness" is a complicated one. 'Mind' may be called *bLa, Yid, Sems, rNam par shes pa* etc. See: Gyatso Kelsang, *Clear Light of Bliss. Māhamudrā in Vajrayāna Buddhism*, transl. by Tenzin Norbu, Boulder 1982, p. 135; D.L. Snellgrove, *The Nine Ways of Bon. Excerpts from "gZi-brjid"*, Boulder 1980, p. 259, n. 36; A. Bharati, *The Tantric Tradition*, London 1975, p. 44-49 etc.

[9] I use the linguistic terminology that has been considerably revised and adjusted to the requirements of this work. In my terminology, a *rheme* is *what* is being told and a *theme* what it is talked *about*. The perception of the materiality of the text, its material form (the cult of the Book as a holy thing) will be *rhematic behaviour*, concentration on its content will be *thematic behavior*, while form is semantically transparent to readers. Rhematic practises are proper to writing cultures with a high ratio of oral tradition, that is, in which tradition is chiefly preserved by word of mouth although the status of writing is higher. See W. Ong, *Oralność i piśmienność* ['Orality and Literacy'], Lublin 1990, and also the opinion by Wilhelm Halbfass in footnote 7.

liberation focuses only on the form and matter of an inscription while a reflective examination of the content (*theme*) is left to "higher authorities." He is sometimes formally dissuaded from focusing on this content.[10] Some spiritual authorities, e.g., Vasubandhu, claim that "the real sense of *mantras* consists of an absence of meaning and that by meditating on absent meaning you come to understand the ontological unreality of the universe."[11]

The form of the text — its visual and audio materiality — is infinitely duplicated. It flutters on prayer streamers or rotates in prayer wheels in Tibetan streams and is inscribed on *mani* stones or carefully copied on the wood-blocks of the canon of writings and amulets, etc.[12] An inscription is looked at, touched and may even be eaten, but is never treated, at least insofar as liberation through the senses is concerned, as a "specific for the memory and the wit." The understanding of the text is left to the "heavenly reader." Does that mean Tibetans, who place trust in liberation through the senses, fall victim to that which, in the European tradition of disputes on the Eucharist, was condemned as "magical sacramentalism?" Can the person who fails to understand that which liberates be liberated?

Endless *mantra*, or prayer chanting, or the search for carnal contact with things which liberate — the tasting of substances which liberate, doing circumambulations of *stūpas* whose sight liberates, and even drinking the water used to wash the monument — all these practices are enigmatic forms of religiosity. The issue would be clearer had this religiosity boiled down to the practises of people who were outside the stream of an orthodox religion. Yet, neither simple Tibetan folk are so simple as to remain outside the religion nor the educated

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[10] This concerns at least text reading from the category of *liberation through hearing*, e.g., TBD and specific hagiographies, the so-called *rNam thar* (literally 'utter liberation'), compare, e.g., the obscene hagiography of the famous Tibetan yogin 'Brugs pa kun legs' pa, the reading of which "liberates through hearing".

[11] *Bodhisattvabhūmi*, [in:] Eliade, *Joga*, p. 230.

[12] Por. N. Douglas, *Tibetan Tantric Charms and Amulets. 230 Examples Reproduced from Original Woodblock*, New York n.d.

Tibetan classes so elite as to be unaware of liberation through the senses. Cognition-not-through-consciousness and seeking liberation through the senses, in the narrow meaning of the proper name and the broad sense of the term, are essential soteriological paths of Tibetan Buddhism that unite "simple" people, evangelical *nepioi*[13], and "the poor in spirit" regardless of origin or social status.

Classifications and Descriptions of Liberation Through the Senses

Liberation through the senses is found in different classifications in Tibetan sources. Be ru mkhyen brtse offers a fourpart category:

"There are several aspects of a Buddha's virtuous conduct, known as liberations through seeing, through hearing, recalling and being touched. Thus by merely seeing a Buddha, hearing his words, recalling them or being touched by his hand, you can become liberated from suffering. (...) All such things happen, however, with no conscious efforts on the part of the Buddha. (...)

The classic example for how liberation through seeing and hearing operates are in terms of the god Indra. Indra sits in his heavenly palace and without doing anything his appearance is reflected on all the facets of its walls. People on earth see this beautiful reflection and are inspired to work to achieve this state. Likewise, Indra has a heavenly drum, the sound of which is so moving that people develop profound insights from merely hearing it.

Just as the sun and moon have no intentions to benefit people, a Buddha fulfils the aims of others effortlessly through his virtuous conduct and without any thought."[14]

This four-part classification of liberation is corroborated by the hagiography of Nam mkha' 'jigs med (1591-1650). It mentions the

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[13] Greek substantive νηπιος, 'infant, child', when used as the antithesis of σοφος, has a meaning of 'simpleton', cf. Matt. 11, 25; Luc. 10, 21.

[14] Wang-ch'ug dorje [dBang phyug rdo rje], *A Guide to Kagyu Mahāmudrā and Guru-yoga: The Mahāmudrā Eliminating the Darkness of Ignorance* [*Phyag chen ma rig mun sel* and *Bla ma lnga bcu pa*, with oral commentary Beru Mkhyen brtse Rin po che, transl. by Alexander Berzin], Dharamsala 1978, p. 147-148.

treasure-text (Tib. *gTer ma*) he discovered; this text "is conducive to deliverance by merely seeing, hearing, remembering and touching it."[15] A slightly modified four-fold category of liberation is offered by Lauf.[16] He speaks of "four blessings of the sacred locality" (Tib. *Grol ba bzhi ldan)* through seeing *(mThong grol)*, hearing *(Thos grol)*, wearing *(bTags grol)* and tasting *(Myang grol)*.

Tulku Thondup classifies liberation through the senses according to the criterion similar to that of six mental powers,[17] with the exception of smell.[18] They are termed "the five swiftly liberating, skillful means of tantra": 1) *mandala* [Skr.], "the diagram which liberates by seeing. In the case of Termas [Tib. *gTer ma]* — the symbolic writing"; 2) *mantra* [Skr.] "the syllables which liberate by hearing"; 3) ambrosia, "substances which liberate by tasting"; 4) *mudrā* [Skr.], "a consort, the source of wisdom of united bliss and emptiness, which liberates by touching"; 5) the so-called consciousness transference (Tib. *'Pho ba)*, "which liberates by thinking".

The most complete is the six-part classification of liberation proposed by Fremantle and Trungpa.[19] It includes seeing, hearing, wearing, tasting, touching and remembering (thinking).

1) liberation through remembering, thinking — This term is used to define an "ordinary" mental reference to the Enlightened One, Buddhas, Bodhisattvas (especially Tārā, or Avalokiteśvara) and also consciousness transference.[20]

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[15] E. Dargyay, *The Rise of Esoteric Buddhism in Tibet,* New York 1978, p. 168.

[16] D.I. Lauf, *Tibetan Sacred Art: The Heritage of Tantra,* Berkeley 1976, p. 205.

[17] Tib. *dBang po drug*: seeing *(Mig gi dbang po)*, hearing *(rNa ba'i dbang po)*, smell *(sNa'i dbang po)*, taste *(lCe'i dbang po)*, touch *(Lus sku'i dbang po)*, and also "mental power" or "comprehension" *(Yid kyi dbang po)*. See: Tsepak Rigzin, *Tibetan-Buddhist Dictionary of Buddhist Terminology,* Dharamsala 1986, p. 289.

[18] Thondup Tulku, *Hidden Teachings of Tibet. An Explanation of the Terma Tradition of Nyingma School of Buddhism,* London 1986, p. 242, n. 152.

[19] TBD, p. XI.

[20] H.G. Mullin, *Death and Dying, The Tibetan Tradition,* Boston 1986, p. 176 etc; Dargyay, *The Rise of Esoteric Buddhism...,* p. 214, n. 58; *Le livre tibétain des morts bardo thodol,* Paris 1980 [1977], p. 50-52 etc.

2) liberation through touch — Its source is the body of the Enlightened One, termed as *nirmanakāya*. The group *nirmanakāya* automatically comprises not only human beings but also animals, e.g., birds or monkeys, considered to be Buddhas in animal forms. Various *sPrul skus*, the people who incarnate themselves consciously — monks, yogins, teachers, doctors, musicians and painters[21] — are among the people those endow liberation through touch. Hidden *sPrul skus*, like "hidden zaddiks" of Hasidism, and people from different walks of life, including cobblers, potters, fishermen, water carriers and even courtesans (compare the hagiographies of eighty-four *mahāsiddhas* and *The Origin of Tārā Tantra*[22]) can also give blessings through touch. In their absence, this liberation can be obtained from their representatives, in the literal (Tibetan *sKu tshab*) and metaphorical meanings of the word, and others such as "the artificial bodies of emanations" of special qualities. These are miraculous monuments and paintings as well as traces of the worldly existence of the Enlightened, e.g., the walls of the grottoes in which they meditated, the imprints of their feet and hands (Tibetan *Phyag rjes, Zhab rjes*), their relics, etc. *gTer mas*, the holy books of Tibetan Buddhism, also liberate through being touched.

3) liberation through wearing (Tibetan *bTags grol*) is not included in any category and may be regarded as the sub-category of liberation through touch or interpreted as veiled liberation through smell. "Wearing" relates to "a brief text comprising mostly *mantras*, fastened to the body of the dead as an amulet."[23] Dargyay also mentions a circular diagram placed on the back, throat, head and heart of the dead.[24] In the hagiography of Gu ru Chos dbang, the patron of *Ma ni pas*, we find a passage about a yogin who killed two animals (a hare and a whistler) with a *mantra*, and later used *bTags grol* to transfer them

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[21] Wang-ch'ug dorje, *A Guide to Kagyu Mahāmudrā and Guru-yoga*, p. 146.

[22] In: Taranatha, *The Origin of the Tārā Tantra* [*sGrol ma'i rgyud kyi byung khung gsal bar byed pa'i lo rgyus gser gyi phren ba zhes bya ba*, transl. by D. Templeman], Dharamsala 1981.

[23] TBD, p. 59, picture on pp. 32, IX.

[24] Dargyay, *The Rise of Esoteric...*, p. 114, n. 117.

through the bardo.[25] The text *Bar do thos grol* reads: "Read this 'Liberation' [through hearing] and 'Liberation through wearing', because together they are like a golden *mandala* decorated with turquoises and gems."[26] The examples of drawings can be found in the *Tibetan Tantric Charms and Amulets*.[27]

That smell can be an agent of liberation through wearing is corroborated by the fact that liberation through wearing (the only one of the group) seems to be almost exclusively meant for the dead, who have the status of *Dri za*, the smell-eaters, the beings feeding on smells when in an intermediate state between life and next incarnation.

Liberation through wearing slightly resembles the practise of *clothing in Names*, known in Jewish and gnostic magic.[28]

4) liberation through taste — Its source is *Dam rdzas*, "a substance which is noble and wondrous in its origin."[29] Si tu Rin po che identifies them as various pills and pellets prepared by saints from herbs and special ingredients and given away after having been blessed. The hagiography of Ma gcig labs gron (1055-1249)[30] mentions numerous five-coloring *bSrel* left behind when the corpse of a holy woman has been cremated *(sKu gdung)*. Allione explains the meaning of the term in the following way: "*Ring bsrel* are small spherical relics, usually white, though sometimes manifesting the five colours, which emerge from the ashes of great teachers after their death or from sacred places such as Buddha statues or stupas. It is said they are brought forth by the devotion of disciples, and even when a very advanced practitioner dies, if there are no devoted disciples, there will be no *ring bsrel*.

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[25] Ibidem, p. 114, 217, n. 116 and 121.

[26] TBD, p. 79.

[27] N. Douglas, *Tibetan Tantric Charms and Amulets. 230 Examples Reproduced from Original Woodblock*, New York n.d., print no. 227, 232.

[28] G. Quispel, *Gnoza* ['Gnosis', transl. by B. Kita], Warszawa 1988, p. 65; G. Scholem, *Kabbalah*, New York 1978 [1960], p. 135-136.

[29] Situpa the XIIth Khentin, *Tilopa (Some Glimpses of His Life)* [transl. by K. Holmes], 1988, p. 58.

[30] T. Allione, *Women of Wisdom* [6 *rNam thars*, transl. from the Tibetan], London 1984, p. 185. Transcription of the original.

There are also cases of *ring bsrel* appearing after the ashes or bits of bone have been collected and kept for some time. Someone might have some remnants they keep very devotedly, and when they look at them after some time, they may have turned into *ring bsrel*. One of them gets bigger and then the bumps become small *rings bsrel*. In 1970, the stupa of Swayambhu in Kathmandu produced *ring bsrel* on the eastern side of the stupa. There were thousands all over the ground and all the monastery, including the highest lama, who almost never left his room, were outside picking them up."[31] Noteworthy in the above description is a special status of *ring bsrel*. Like many other causes of liberation through the senses, they straddle the line between animate and inanimate worlds.

The hagiography of Milarepa (Tib.: Mi la ras pa) describes a search for *Ring bsrel* in the ashes left after the cremation ceremony of a saint. A knife, a sugarloaf, a cloth and a note were found there: "When cut with this knife, the cloth and sugar will never be exhausted. Cut as many strips from the cloth and as many bits from the sugar as you can, and distribute them among the people. Everyone who tastes the sugar and touches the cloth will gain liberation from the lower realms, because these things, being the food and clothes of Milarepa throughout his meditative awakening, were blessed by the Buddhas who appeared in the past. Any sentient being who has heard the name of Milarepa even once and in whom it produced veneration will not go through the cycle of rebirth in the lower realms for seven lifetimes."[32]

Waddell also writes that after cremation, the body of the Buddha did not turn into ashes but into pellets resembling sago seeds.[33] Waddell divides them into *'Phel gdung* which, he claims, come from a burnt

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[31] Ibidem, p. 203, n. 140.

[32] Lobsang Lhalungpa, *The Life of Milarepa. A New Translation from the Tibetan* [*Gtsan smyon heruka*], Boulder 1982, 195; also p. 220, n. 25.

[33] L.A. Waddel, *Tibetan Buddhism With Its Mystic Cults, Symbolism and Mythology and Its Relation to Indian Buddhism*, New York 1972 [1895], p. 317, n. 4 (transcription of the original): "On the cremation of the body of a Buddha it is believed that no more ash results, on the contrary, the body swells up and resolves into a mass of sago-

body and *Ring bsrel* which come from the bones of a saint. The former
are kept in the most sacred *stūpa* in Sikkim, called *mThong ba rang
grol,* 'liberating spontaneously just through being looked at'. Apart
from the relics of Śākyamuni Buddha, the ashes of the former Kāśyapa
Buddha are also said to be there.

The following is a description of liberation through taste in the
hagiography of Orgyan Lingpa. Reportedly, his body "should have
turned into precious relics which would set free a person who tasted
them within the next seven lives *(sKye bdun myang grol).* (...) [One
of the descendants of the deceased] asked for a small piece of flesh
from a corpse. After he had tasted it, his religious zeal blazed up and
he rose in the air one *khru* [Tib. Khru = 15 inches] above the ground.
He traveled to various countries through the air. On this account the
corpse was highly esteemed."[34]

According to Lhalungpa, the production of liberating tablets is
rooted in the alchemic tradition of eighty-four *mahāsiddhas*[35]: "The
origin of these pills were the enlightened masters of ancient India
and Tibet who had the personal power of esoteric alchemy so that
they were able to transform five kinds of flesh and five liquids into
ambrosia for the benefit of the initiated."[36] This "ancient alchemy"
is referred to by Taranatha in his *Origin of the Tārā Tantra.* In the

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like granules of two kinds, (a) *Phe-dun,* from the flesh as small white granules, and
(b) *ring-srel,* yellowish larger nodules from the bones. It is the former sort which are
believed to be preserved at the holiest Caitya of Sikkim, namely *T'on-wa ran grol,* or
«Saviour by mere sight». It owes its special sanctity to its reputedly containing some
of the funeral granules of the mythical Buddha antecedent to Śākya Muni, namely
Od-srun, or Kāśyapa, the reclics having been deposited there by Jik-mi Pawo, the
incarnation and succesor of St. Lha-tsün."

[34] Dargyay, *The Rise...,* p. 126.

[35] *Buddha Lions. The Lives of the Eighty-Four Siddhas* [*Caturāśiti-siddhā-pravṛtti;
Grub thob brgya cu rtsa bzhi'i lo rgyus,* transl. by J.B. Robinson], Berkeley 1979.

[36] Lobsang Lhalungpa, *The Life of Milarepa,* p. 215, n. 17; see also: *Sky Dancer,
The Secret Life and Songs of the Lady Yeshe Tsogyel* [transl. by K. Dowman], London
n.d, p. 201, n. 20; Dargyay, *The Rise...,* p. 137, 221, n. 209; S. Beyer, *The Cult of
Tārā. Magic and Ritual in Tibet,* Berkeley 1978, p. 283-284, 252-253.

book, King Haribhadra perfected his magical power of manufacturing *Ril bu*. According to the footnote, *Ril bu* are "the sacrament that should be eaten during crises, when life forces are impaired, in danger, after certain dreams, etc."[37]

Liberation through taste is especially useful in the present dark era of *Kali-yuga*, the 19th-century Tibetan text *Wondrous Ocean*[38] claims. The source of liberation through taste is defined by the general term of nectar (Tib.: *bDud rtsi*): "The nectars that were discovered as termas have been prepared by (. . .) Padmasambhava (. . .). Therefore, if one takes the nectar by itself the channels (*rTsa*), essence or semen (*Khams*), energy [or air] (*rLung*) and mind (*Sems*) will receive blessings spontaneously and the excellent accomplishment will be achieved, like being intoxicated by alcohol, being made by aconite (*Bong nga*) and being deluded with visions by datura or thorn apple (*Thang khrom, dhattura*) since the nectar has the extraordinary power of not depending on inner (mental) power, owing to the greatness of the skillful means of *mantra* (. . .)"[39]

5) liberation through hearing (Tib.: *Thos grol*). The book known in the West as the *Tibetan Book of the Dead* or *Bar do thos grol chen mo*, is the most famous example of this liberation. Trungpa writes: "it is one of a series of instructions on six types of liberation: liberation through hearing, liberation through wearing, liberation through seeing, liberation through remembering, liberation through tasting, and liberation through touching. They were composed by Padmasambhava and written down by his wife, Yeshe Tsogyal [Ye she mTso rgyal], along with the *sādhana* of the two *mandalas* of forty-two peaceful and fifty-eight wrathful deities."[40] The text of the TBD is whispered into the ear of a dying or dead person (Tib.: *'chi bo'i rna khung du brjod pa*).

"This teaching does not need any practice, it is a profound instruction which liberates just by being seen and heard and read. This pro-

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[37] Taranatha, *The Origin of the Tārā Tantra*, p. 53, n. 64.
[38] Thondup, *Hidden Teachings of Tibet*, p. 95, 152-153.
[39] Ibidem, p. 152-153.
[40] TBD, p. XI.

found instruction leads great sinners on the secret path. If one does not forget its words and terms even when being chased by seven dogs, the instruction liberates in the bardo of the moment before death. Even if the Buddhas of the past, present and future were to search, they would not find a better teaching than this."[41] "Therefore it is extremely important to train the mind thoroughly in this 'Liberation through Hearing in the Bardo', especially during one's life. It should be grasped, it should be perfected, it should be read aloud, it should be memorised properly, it should be practised three times a day without fail, the meaning of its words should be made completely clear in the mind, its words and meaning should not be forgotten even if a hundred murderers were to appear and chase one. Since this is called 'The Great Liberation through Hearing', even people who have committed the five deadly sins will certainly be liberated if they only hear it; therefore it should be read aloud among great crowds and spread afar.

Even if it has been heard like this only once and the meaning has not been understood, in the bardo state the mind becomes nine times more clear, so then it will be remembered with not even a single word forgotten. Therefore it should be told to all during their life, it should be read at the bedside of all the sick, it should be read beside the bodies of the dead, it should be spread far and wide. To meet with it is great good fortune."[42]

Other forms of liberation through hearing include all kinds of sacred language, *mantra* and *dhāraṇī*. Their function at the moment of death (they occur in some versions of the text of the TBD) is termed by Lauf as communication through a dead person with bardo deities. If a dead person is able to know their names and recognize them as visions or projections of his mind, he will no longer fear them.[43]

6) liberation through seeing (Tib.: *mThong grol*) All the sources discussed in the case of liberation through touch endow liberation

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[41] TBD, p. 94.

[42] TBD, p. 71.

[43] D.I. Lauf, *Secret Doctrines of the Tibetan Book of the Dead* [transl. by G. Parkes], Boulder 1977, p. 197.

through being seen: a view of the "natural" and "artificial" bodies of emanation (Tib.: *sPrul sku*), that is, both people — especially new-born tulkus — and their "representatives" (Tib.: *sKu tshab*), monuments, paintings, the objects consecrated by their presence, *gTer mas*, etc. Let me give a couple of examples. *The Guide to the Holy Places of Central Tibet*[44] mentions, first of all, *stūpas* in the category of liberation through seeing. They are, i.a., *mThong grol chen mo* ('the great liberation through seeing') in Jo nang,[45] in Byams pa glin,[46] *sKu 'bum mthong grol chen mo* or a big *stūpa* of a thousand Buddhas in sKu 'bum.[47] In Bras spung, there is *Byams pa mthong grol*, a monument of Maitreya, the Buddha of future, that "liberates people just by being looked at."[48] A golden *stūpa*, called *mThong ba don ldan* ('the view that gives the blessing of virtue and religion')[49] with the relics of Tsong kha pa, is kept at a monastery in dGa' ldan. I have already mentioned *mThong ba rang grol* in Sikkim where there are relics of Śākyamuni and of the former Buddha Kāśyapa.[50] All monuments and pictures that have come into being spontaneously (Tib.: *Rang 'byung*), all *gTer mas* and their so-called symbolic writing liberate: "All the Terma scripts are blessed by Guru Rinpoche himself and possess the greatness of granting liberation by seeing."[51] The sentence from the *Tibetan Book of the Dead* "the Great Liberation through Hearing instructions about the *Bar do*, that liberate through being heard and seen" refers to both the very material character of the book, which ranks among the category of *gTermas*, and to the images the text evokes.

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[44] *Mk'yen brtse's Guide to the Holy Places of Central Tibet* [transl. by A. Ferrari, L. Petech, H. Richardson], Roma 1958.

[45] Ibidem, p. 67, 156.

[46] Ibidem, p. 45, 133.

[47] Ibidem, p. 66-67 etc; also: G. Tucci, *Tibetan Painted Scrolls*, vol. I, Roma 1949, p. 191-196; J.N. Roerich, *Izbrannyje trudy* [*Blue Annals, Biography of Dharmasvamin* etc], Moskwa 1967, p. 776 etc.

[48] *Mk'yen brtse's Guide...*, p. 97-98, n. 76.

[49] Ibidem, p. 108, n. 108.

[50] Waddel, *Tibetan Buddhism...*, p. 314, n. 112.

[51] Thondup, *Hidden Teachings of Tibet*, p. 112.

The so-called black crown of Karmapas (Tib.: *Zhva nag*), the authorities of the bKa' rgyud pa line, is also an interesting example of liberation through seeing. Due to the colour of the crown, the line is sometimes called 'black hats' in the West. The history of the crown could be the subject of a separate study. Let us quote Gega Lama, a very competent author in Tibetan iconography: "It is the crown signifying spiritual power. It is worn by Karmapas, foretold in *Samādhirājasūtra* and *Laṅkāvatārasūtra*. In the past a crown woven from the hair of 100,000 dakinis was placed by Buddhas and Bodhisattvas on the head of sage dKon pa skyes. As all he ever did was for the benefit of all sentient beings, he was master of activity (*Phrin las pa* or *Ka rma pa*) of the Victorious Ones. Although the crown was on the heads of all successive incarnations in the Karmapa line as the manifestation of their inner awareness [awakening], it was not visible to everyone, but only to exceptionally spiritually sensitive people. De bzhin gshegs pa, the fifth incarnation, was born in 1928 of the Buddhist era [1384]. At the age of 24, he went to China and met with emperor Yung lo. The emperor was able to see the black crown and asked for permission to make its material replica, based on his vision. Having obtained consent, he ordered to make the other black crown (*Zhva nag*), a duplicate of the original, also termed as the crown of 100,000 *ḍākinīs* (*mKha' 'gro 'bum zhva*). It was woven in the year 1951 of the Buddhist era [1402]."[52]

Chams (Tib.: *'Cham*) or mystery dance dramas,[53] held on important religious holidays at Tibetan monasteries, can be another source of liberation through seeing. Thang stong rgyal po, called sometimes the Tibetan Leonardo da Vinci (W. Kahlen), was the author of one of the

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[52] Gega Lama, *Principles of Tibetan Art: Illustrations and Explanations of Buddhist Iconography and Iconometry According to Karma Gadri School*, Darjeeling 1983, vol. 2, p. 124. See also: S.L. Huntington, J.C. Huntington, *Leaves from the Bodhi Tree. The Art of Pālā India (8th-12th Centuries) and Its International Legacy* [Exhibition at The Dayton Art Institute], Seattle-London 1990, p. 336, 356; Thondup, *Hidden Teachings...*, p. 42, 75; Lauf, *Secret Doctrines of the Tibetan Book of the Dead*, p. 225.

[53] Dargyay, *The Rise...*, p. 222, n. 211.

most popular shows. "His charismatic activity had already become effective by merely watching [the play]."[54]

Ma ni pas — *The Advocates of Liberation Through the Senses*

*Ma ni pa*s, or wandering beggars, are the most fervent advocates of liberation through the senses. They carry portable chapels (Tib.: *bKra shis sgo mang*) to illustrate their devout stories. In the strongly hierarchical Tibetan society from the times preceding the Chinese invasion, *Ma ni pa*s were at the next-to-the-last level of the social ladder, just ahead of beggars.[55] Manipas preach sermons to country folk (*rGyal khams pa*); they tell stories about the descent of dynasties and families (*rGyal rabs*), that usually begin with the myth of the "creation of the world", histories of the origin of Tibetan clans, mythical stories of Padmasambhava, Gesar, the Tibetan national hero, and saints (their hagiographies are called *rNam thar*, 'complete liberation'). *Ma ni pa*s protect oral literature although the compositions they recite are also often preserved in writing. Their oral tradition aims, on the one hand, at disseminating basic Buddhist ideas in a popular form and, on the other, preserving the folk heritage, including myths about the beginning of the world and its different races, that praise the divine origin of certain families, etc.[56]

Many records of the clash between indirect[57] and direct thought in Tibetan culture are preserved, with the former valuing symbols and cognition-not-through-consciousness and favoring *Ma ni pa*s, and the latter claiming they are only superstitious loafers. Epstein[58] writes of the contempt with which 'Phags pa bla ma of the Sa skya school spoke

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[54] Ibidem, p. 154.

[55] R.A. Stein, *Recherches sur l'epopée et la barde au Tibet*, Paris 1959, p. 324, 330; G. Tucci, *The Religions of Tibet* [transl. by G. Samuel], Berkeley 1988 [1970], p. 207.

[56] Ibidem, p. 207.

[57] G. Durand, *Wyobraźnia symboliczna* ['Imagination symbolique'], transl. by C. Rowiński, Warszawa 1986.

[58] L. Epstein, *Biography of Karma Bakshi: Translation and Annotation* [transl. from the Tibetan, dissertation at University of Washington], Washington 1968, p. 3-4.

of Karma Pak shi (Karmapa II), his rival at the court of Kublai khan. For Pakpa Lama, Karma Pakshi was "merely a *Ma ni pa*".

Ma ni pas — their name derives from *mani*, the term of the *mantra* of Avalokiteśvara — are the most fervent advocates of sensual liberation, especially connected with the cult of their patron, the Bodhisattva of compassion. The phenomenon of *Ma ni pas* dates back to the 13th-century monk Gu ru Chos dbang (1212-1273), who recommended that the *mantra* of Avalokiteśvara[59] should be heard at "market places."[60] We learn from the monk's hagiography that his disciple Bha ro gtsug 'dzin attained enlightenment just through "listening to Chos dbang's voice."[61] In *Mani bka' 'bum*, the work attributed to the king Srong btsan sgam po, we find enthusiastic apologetics of liberation through the senses.[62]

Similarly endless benefits flow from the explanation of the sense of *mani* to other beings. You can count the grains of sand, the text in question assures, drops in the ocean, seeds growing on four continents. You can also weigh Mount Meru but you cannot count the benefits flowing from a single repetition of this *mantra*. "Therefore, spread the teaching of *mani* in the ten directions of *saṃsāra*!"[63] — the text concludes.

Liberation Through The Senses: An Attempt to Interpret the Soteriological Concept

At first sight the Tibetan concept of liberation through the senses requires no explanation as a typical example of non-reflective popular religiosity. Only when put in broader cultural and philosophical con-

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[59] OṀ MAṆI PADME HUM.

[60] D.L. Snellgrove, H. Richardson, *Tybet, zarys historii kultury* ['Tibet. History of Culture', transl. by S. Godziński], Warszawa 1968, chapt. 3; *Mani bka' 'bum*, version A, p. 224 etc.

[61] Dargyay, *The Rise*, p. 112.

[62] L. Epstein, "On the History and Psychology of the *'Da-logs*," *The Tibet Journal*, vol. 7: 1982, No 4, p. 26ff.

[63] Ibidem.

text of comparative religious sciences, a profound idea will come into view in this non-reflectiveness. It is best reflected in the words of Oskar Miłosz: "[T]o wait for faith in order to pray is to put the cart before the horse. Our path leads from the physical to the spiritual."[64]

With all its specific character, the Tibetan idea of carnal enstasy (Greek: *enstasis*) is not so strange to Europeans; it is, however, the cause of frequent misunderstandings. For reasons of clarity an outline of the soteriological concept of liberation through the senses, based on a phenomenological analysis of the comparative material, will be proposed in this study. I have selected this material according to the criterion of theme or content,[65] therefore, this selection goes beyond the so-called great division into high and low, elite and popular culture.[66]

In this work Tibetans' claim that just "hearing, seeing, tasting and touching liberates" will be taken seriously. The following issue arises: How, in the philosophical sense of the question, can we understand the concept of liberation through the senses? The idea to analyze religious texts as if they were philosophical is not new (see the work of Lev Shestov, who successfully compared Hegel to Job and Abraham to Kant). The question about senses will now be directed toward the tradition Europeans find unintelligible although, as we will see, they are quite familiar with.[67]

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[64] Oskar Miłosz, in: C. Miłosz, *Nieobjęta ziemia*, Wrocław 1996, p. 74.

[65] I used sources from high and low culture, that document the same type or style of religiosity. For criteria of generic vs. genetic differentiation in selecting the sources, see: A. Kutrzeba-Pojnarowa, J. Tokarska-Bakir, "Etnologia", "Etnografia", the entries in the *Great Encyclopaedia of the Polish Science Publishers* PWN (in print).

[66] G. Lenclud, "Ethnologie et histoire, hier et aujourd'hui, en France," in: *Ethnologies en mirroir. La France et les pays allemandes*, Colloque *Ethnologie française, Mitteleuropäische Volkskunde*, Bad Homburg, ed. I. Chiva, U. Jeggle, Paris 1987, p. 35-65.

[67] See: H.W. Haussing, *Historia kultury bizantyjskiej*, ['History of Byzantium', transl. by T. Zabłudowski, Warszawa 1969, p. 223]. R. Gansiniec, "Eucharystia w wierzeniach i praktykach ludu" ['Eucharist in folk-beliefs', "Lud" 1957, vol. 50,

The idea of liberation through the senses should be liberated from hackneyed ethnographic interpretations (magic, the popular segment of religion, the echo of mystic practices distorted by the simpletons, etc.). The truth is that hope for liberation through simple sensual contact emerges, first of all, in popular religiosity. How can you comprehend it without simplifying, ignoring it, being condescending or without lifting its claim up to the truth?

This is by no means an easy task. To high culture and its true offspring, namely, European ethnology, all popular religiosity has always been a classic "stranger". The stranger was assigned an interpreter who not only interpreted but, first of all and in good faith, justified and corrected the barbarian, putting a brave face any time the "stranger" seemed to start talking nonsense. The stranger was not listened to.

Putting Tibetans aside, let's think of the way we would react to the sight of Lourdes pilgrims who, one after another, touch the rock, polished by thousands of hands, where the Virgin Mary appeared. What do we think of pilgrims who draw water from a holy spring, touch the garment of the dormant Virgin Mary during her funeral in Kalwaria Pacławska (Poland) or add ashes from procession flowers to their food? "The Middle Ages" — we pronounce but at the same time rush to get the autographs of famous people, take part in auctions of their memorabilia, kiss the photos of idols and loved ones, and when bed-ridden, do not spurn water from Lourdes, even if it is poured from a cheap Virgin Mary-shaped bottle with a twist-off cap. A member of the intelligentsia, who is a practising believer, is ready to observe some traditional rituals but doesn't treat them seriously. Research into contemporary religiosity of the middle class indicates profound skepticism toward dogmas, which by no means excludes parareligious practices addressed to the current mass culture saints.

Czesław Miłosz ponders the phenomenon of popular religiosity in the essay *A Metaphysical Pause*. Miłosz, one of few contemporary thinkers who can appreciate its resources, describes a mass in a Swiss

p. 81, n. 11]. M. Buber, *Opowieści chasydów* ['Tales of Hasidim', transl. by P. Hertz], Poznań 1989, p. 19-20.

countryside church: "Those people from Brunnen (...), he says, are innocent. They are accused of possessing tardy imagination, of calfish contemplation of man, a tree, a house which simply exist to them. Period. That is why they can pray. Faith requires a minimum guarantee that the word «to be» has some meaning. (...) There is sacrality stronger than all our rebellions, the sacrality of a loaf of bread on the table, a rough tree trunk in which there is the depth of being we intuitively scent."[68] These are not theological dogmas but just the popular images of the cosmos that keep religions alive, says Miłosz.

Miłosz, however, is wrong to say later that a crisis in conceptions about the cosmos, undermining faith in the realism of symbols and in the simple "sensuality of deity", began only in the times of Copernicus. So is J.P. Uberoi[69], who shifted the date of this disaster to the Reformation. Neither the formlessness of space that gradually lost its order nor "the ultimate separation of word and sign" in European imagination gave rise to the process of destruction of the religious universe, which manifested itself in the separation of thought and being, man and the world, art and religion. The world of archaic ontology[70] was doomed

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[68] C. Miłosz, *Metafizyczna pauza* ['A Metaphysical Pause'], Kraków 1995, p. 21, 70.

[69] J.P. Uberoi, *Science and Culture*, Delhi 1978, p. 25 ff.

[70] This Eliadean term is used in a specific context given by Wiesław Juszczak (*Fragmenty. Szkice z teorii i filozofii sztuki*) ['Fragments. Essays from the Theory and Philosophy of Art'] Warszawa 1995), see especially *Treść rzeczy pierwszych* ['Content of First Things'] and *Występny ornament* ['The Illicit Ornament']. Speaking of archaic ontology, Eliade (M. Eliade, *Traktat o historii religii* ['Traité de l'histoire des religions'] Warszawa 1995) means not only a "worldview" but simply "the way the world is" in archaic cultures in which religion is an omnipresent element regulating all spheres of life. Each natural, social, and artistic phenomenon is a manifestation of the sacred. "From most elementary hierophanies, e.g., a manifestation of the sacred in any object, stone, a tree — to the supreme one, the incarnation of the sacred in Jesus Christ never ceases to last. On a structural plane, we face the same secret act: the manifestation of something «entirely different» — the reality that does not belong to our world — in objects that form an integral part of this natural, secular world." (M. Eliade, *Death, Afterlife and Eschatology. A Thematic Sourcebook of the History of Religion*, New York, London 1974, p. 160).

to corruption from the very beginning. Alluding to a famous Heideg-
gerian term one can say: time has always been "vain" or corrupted.
Not only in Europe but also in Tibet, and not only today under Chi-
nese occupation but once under the Śākyamuni Buddha. The decline
of archaic ontology is connected with man's radical finiteness and with
what Heidegger called "the temporality of being," and not with precise
historical time or a definite geographic location. Though its intensity
varies, this is a permanent process and it takes place in its individual
abodes, be they the whole culture or a single human being.

The impact of archaic ontology on Tibetan culture is obviously
stronger than on contemporary European culture, but the ontology
can be neither included nor entirely excluded from European culture.
Cultures lose and regain them; none of them own it. You can identify
its islands, the status of which resembles the magical time-space of a
fable or the one in which the action of Andrei Tarkovski's *Stalker* took
place. They exist today but may disappear without a trace tomorrow.

Archaic Ontology is Always an sich; It is not Aware of Itself

The most important thing is the kind of knowledge and self-
knowledge this ontology is shaping. The basic feature of the world of
archaic ontology is its unconsciousness, or its non-reflection. *Archaic
ontology is not aware of itself.* It only exists in the state *an sich*, like
Saint Augustine's "sense of time", "knowledge of God" in Thomas a
Kempis or "good" in Simone Weil, lost when being aware of it.[71]

Here we have Weil, the intellectual and ascetic, who unexpectedly
lends her support to the idea of the religiosity of liberation through
the senses. This passage from her writings naturally singles out the
problems we must touch upon in order to trace the soteriological
meaning of these sources of liberation. She writes, "it is necessary that
part of the soul existing in time, the discursive part, which cares for
the measures, should be destroyed. The method of Zen Buddhist koans

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[71] S. Weil, *Pisma wybrane* ['Selected Writings', transl. by C. Miłosz], Kraków
1991, p. 123.

helps to destroy it."[72] Weil writes that at times when her headaches, torturing her since adolescence, grew worse, she endlessly repeated a verse of one of the 18th-century metaphysical poets. "I believed that I was only reciting a beautiful poem, but, contrary to my will, this recitation possessed the power of a prayer. Just when I was reciting it, it happened that (. . .) Christ himself descended and conquered me for himself."[73]

This admission will lead us into unknown territory. Weil says that, firstly, a mystical experience, in the strictest sense of the word, is accessible after part (the "discursive part") of the soul is destroyed. Secondly, she suggests that repetition, or recitation, happens to be a "vehicle" or an "instrument" in the process of destroying discursiveness. Thirdly, she makes it clear that the beneficial effect of this occurrence is not determined by what is being repeated. Let us analyze the three motives that mark the phenomenological form of the idea of liberation through the senses.

"The Destruction of the Discursive Part of the Soul"

Thomas Merton was also sure it is necessary to destroy the discursive part of the soul and the "trivial ego, this whim of imagination." Assessing the contemporary European consciousness, Merton stressed the huge impact the Cartesian idea *cogito* had on it. He wrote that the more contemporary man was able to develop his consciousness as a subject against objects, and the more he comprehended the relation between these objects and himself, the more effectively he was able to manipulate these objects and protect himself in the bubble of his subjectivity. This shelter gradually turns into a prison, and the sense of isolation and the role of an observer, not a participant, cause that other selves cease to be treated by him as persons. Merton claimed that this objectifying had contributed to the contemporary "death of God." Cartesian thought, he writes, began with an attempt to reach God as

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[72] Ibidem, p. 81.

[73] Ibidem, p. 35.

though he had been an object. "When God becomes an object, sooner or later, he dies because God cannot be thought of as an object."[74]

Nolens volens, Merton says so almost repeating after Heidegger: "A being is a being not because man is looking at it. It is rather man at whom the being is looking."[75] The moment man is ready to believe that hierophanies occur to him and because of him heralds the beginning of "corrupted time" (Heidegger), the actual decay of archaic ontology. This mistake is costly: It apparently elevates man to great honors but, as a matter of fact, in reality casts him into falsehood that makes the discovery and creation of real ties with the world impossible.

The diagnoses of Weil and Merton are astonishingly unanimous. The trivial "self" should be destroyed in ourselves before religion is really born inside of us. The discursive part of the soul, the abode of pride and a false comprehension of the world, must be annihilated.

Repetition as an Existential Category

How is the discursive trivial "self" destroyed? Weil argues that it is destroyed through consumption. "Discursive intelligence is destroyed by the contemplation of clear and inevitable contradictions. A koan. Secrets. The will is destroyed through performing impossible tasks. Superhuman ventures in fables."[76]

One of the well-tried methods of destroying discursiveness is repetition. It is not the question of a narrative function of repetition in a story or a trance-creating function. At stake is repetition as the existential category Søren Kierkegaard has in mind when speaking of "the obscure metaphysics of repetitions,"[77] or Ryszard Przybylski who says: "to repeat means to disclose the seventh veil of consciousness."[78] "An

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[74] T. Merton, *Zen i ptaki żądzy* ['Zen and Birds of the Appetite', transl. by A. Szostkiewicz], Warszawa 1989, p. 29.

[75] M. Heidegger, "Die Zeit des Weltbildes," in: *Holzwege*, Frankfurt am Main 1950.

[76] Weil, *Pisma wybrane*, p. 154.

[77] S. Kierkegaard, *Powtórzenie* ['Repetition'], in: J. Sadzik, [Introduction to:] *Księga Hioba* ('Book of Job', transl. by C. Miłosz] Paris 1980, p. 15.

[78] R. Przybylski, *Słowo i milczenie bohatera Polaków*, ['Word and Silence of the Polish Hero'], Warszawa 1993, p. 56.

entranced Bushman or an Eskimo staring at a fire, gouging out a circle
on a flat rocky surface, attains the same extinction of the ego (and the
same power) as dervishes or Pueblo Indian holy dancers."[79]

The Eastern Christian's so-called Christ's prayer is a typical exam-
ple of automatic repetition leading to the destruction of discursiveness:
"Deprive the reason of any discursive thought (...) and replace it with
the call «Jesus, Son of God, have mercy on me!» and try to pray inside
yourself, instead of having any thought," the 12th-century treatise by
Nicephorus recommends.[80] This prayer is also discussed in *Pilgrim's
Stories*: "to show man's dependence on God's will in a clearer way and
to immerse him in humbleness, God left the decision on the number of
prayers in the hands of man, instructing him to keep on praying at all
times and in all places. This paves the way for a secret way of attain-
ing real prayer."[81] "Saying prayers means averting any thought,"[82] says
Evagrius Ponticus (345-399).

It is not difficult to understand the charges higher cultures bring
against the innocent who patter prayers.[83] They are expressed in the
old opposition *devotio stulta* and *devotio sacra*, based on the contempt
for the unintelligible. The former "unreasonable devotion" was to char-
acterize *illiterati et idiotae* while the latter was to describe those who
could read and were ready to say Roman Catholic prayers only after
they had grasped their meaning. Automatic prayer pattering poses the
threat of committing a mortal sin. There are plenty of warnings against
committing similar unintentional offences in medieval and devotional
literature. This rationalist stream of religiosity, mindful of "proper de-

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[79] P. Mathiesen, *Śnieżna pantera* ['The Snow Leopard', transl. by B. Kluczborska],
Warszawa, 1988, p. 90.

[80] In: Mnich Kościoła Wschodniego, *Modlitwa Jezusowa* ['Jesus Prayer', transl.
K. Górski], Kraków 1993, p. 36.

[81] *Szczere opowieści pielgrzyma, przedstawione jego ojcu duchowemu*, ['Pilgrim's
Stories', transl. by A. Wojnowski], Poznań 1988, p. 154.

[82] In: K. Armstrong, *Historia Boga. 4000 lat dziejów Boga w judaizmie, chrześci-
jaństwie i islamie* ['A History of God. The 4000 Year Quest of Judaism, Christianity
and Islam', transl. by B. Cendrowska], Warszawa 1996, p. 238.

[83] *Szczere opowieści pielgrzyma*, p. 153.

votion," culminated in the times of the Protestant Reformation propagating the idea of rendering the text of the Bible in vernacular translations. From this time on, the understanding of God, or the "rationalization of the Revelation", became the basic form of worship paid to God.

There was, however, a different tendency all the time, and it was not limited to low culture. It stressed non-reason and non-knowledge in soteriology, distrusted intellect and was rather ready to trust senses. This sensualist tendency, typical of oral cultures in general, manifests itself in the specific use of sacred things or texts, and shows interest not so much in their theme (what a text is *about* or *what* an image represents), but in their rheme[84] (the materiality of a text, the substance of an image, what the text or the image is). The prophet Ezekiel's eating of a Torah scroll (Isa. 3.3), or the swallowing of a *gTer ma* by 18th-century Tibetan yogin 'Jigs med gling pa,[85] are the archetypes of rhematic religiosity. Some forms of cult are usually characterized by a "rhematic approach." In religious practices the stress is put on the activity itself (kneeling, walking on the knees, bowing, holy mountain circumambulation, prayer pattering, praying with beads, etc.) and not on the content or intention of prayers recommended by a breviary.

This rhematic approach is expressed in the following instructions on how to deal with a text: "You needn't understand, it is enough to read diligently,"[86] or "Give up understanding in this work."[87] "You may listen and listen but you will not understand. You may look and look again but you will never know," Isaiah says (Isa. 6.9),[88] and his words are repeated by Jesus Christ in the Gospel according to Saint Matthew (Matt. 13.14-15). An old man told a young hermit to say Christ's prayer

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[84] See n. 9.

[85] Thondup Tulku, *Hidden Teachings of Tibet...*, p. 89.

[86] *Szczere opowieści pielgrzyma*, p. 40.

[87] *Obłok niewiedzy*, p. 69.

[88] See also: idea that the more the Holy Names are incomprehensible, the higher is the rank of prayer, in: G. Scholem, *Mistycyzm żydowski i jego główne kierunki* ['Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism', transl. by I. Kania], Warszawa 1997 [1941], p. 194-201.

as a remedy for overcoming desires he was overpowered with; it was supposed to work regardless of whether its words were understood by the man who uttered it: "Just say these words, and God will help you," the old man advised the young hermit. "Abba Pimen and other fathers said that a snake charmer did not know the power of his words, but when a snake heard them, it got calm and yielded to their power. We do not know the power of the words we utter, but demons get scared and flee when they hear the words we say."[89]

Following the example of Dionysius the Areopagite, who recommended knowing God "through non-reason," the advocates of arational religiosity made a sharp distinction between heart and reason, rejecting the rational understanding of God for the benefit of *clinging*,[90] staying with God. The latter concept, known as *devekut* and drawn from Kabbalah and Hasidism, should be of special interest in the philosophical context of liberation through the senses. According to *devekut*, the ultimate aim of man's life is to attain unity and intimacy with God.[91] Man's actions may not only bring him closer to or farther from God but may also have an influence on God himself and accelerate or delay the coming of the Messiah. We read about it in the text attributed to Ba'al Shem Tov, the founder of Hasidism: "Everyone may contribute to completeness and unity on high, that is in God, by performing even the most physical activities, such as eating, drinking, having sexual intercourse, developing trade and socializing. (...) «Get to know God in all your ways»." In another case, Ba'al Shem Tov comments on a verse from the Book of Job in the following way. " 'And I shall discern my witness standing at my side' (Job 19.26): By attaining the greatest sensual pleasure, namely, the pleasure of sexual orgasm, man gives pleasure to God himself. This pleasure comes from the union of man

[89] R. Przybylski, *Pustelnicy i demony* ['Hermits and Demons'], Kraków 1994, p. 122.

[90] Abraham Abulafia, in: G. Scholem, *Kabbalah*, New York 1978, p. 53ff.

[91] B.L. Sherwin, *Duchowe dziedzictwo Żydów polskich* ['Spiritual Heritage of The Polish Jews', transl. by W. Chrostowski], Warszawa 1995, p. 158ff.

and woman, which contributes to unity on high."[92] The verse from the Book of Job was of special importance to medieval Cabbalists, who recommended this contemplation as the way to know God. This goal is achieved by *avodah ba-gaszmiut*, the divine service through materiality, the Hasidic practice of adoring God through carnality: eating, sexual intercourses and defecation.

The Hasidic idea of materiality as a ladder towards the invisible, like any rhematic religiosity in general, is rooted in the realistic assessment of a disproportion between human wishes and possibilities. For "to wait for faith in order to pray is to put the cart before the horse. Our path leads from what is physical to what is spiritual."[93]

Liberation Through Prayer Pattering

The last fragment of Weil's statement, which anticipates the issue of liberation through the senses, concerns the postulate not to thematize texts or actions that help destroy discursive consciousness. In the case of Weil, a poem by the 18th-century poet helped destroy it. In Christ's prayer, it was a pious call; in Middle and Far Eastern prayers, both in Muslim recitation *dhikr* and in *mantra* chanting by Hindus and Buddhists, a holy name or sound was instrumental in the process of destroying discursive consciousness.[94] In all these cases, it is hard to speak of following the content of prayers because of the pace of narration and the sole concentration on sound and rhythm.

There is a Christian folk story about three hermits living on an island lost in the sea.[95] The three holy men prayed with words you could not find in any breviary: "Three of You, three of us, have mercy on us." A bishop who happened to visit the island on his sea voyage decided to teach them the real Our Father prayer. Having taught them, he sailed

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[92] Ibidem, p. 161-162.

[93] Oskar Miłosz, in: C. Miłosz, *Nieobjęta ziemia*, Wrocław 1996, p. 74.

[94] J.Y. Leloup, *Hezychazm. Zapomniana tradycja modlitewna*, ['*Escrit sur l'hésychasm. Une tradition contemplative oubliée'*, transl. by H. Sobieraj], Kraków 1996.

[95] L. Tołstoj, *Trzej starcy* ["The Three Old Men"], in: R. Łużny, *Opowieść niewidzialnym mieście Kitieżu* ['Story of the Unseen City Kitież', transl. by R. Łużny], Warszawa 1988, p. 346-352.

away. At dawn, light was seen on the island. The three men were running on the water, as though they were on a dry surface, trying to ask the bishop about the prayer and a word they had forgotten. There are many similar stories in Asian folklore, e.g. the Tibetan story of a plowman who attained enlightenment after he had walked behind a yak-pulled plow and chanted the mispronounced *mantra* of Avalokiteśvara while working. Koreans know the story about Sok Du, the monastery cook, who replaced koan "the Buddha is mind" by "the Buddha is a shoe of grass," which, however, did not prevent him from attaining enlightenment.[96]

The meaning of these events becomes clear in view of the statement by the Buddhist philosopher, Vasubandhu, who claimed the true meaning of *mantras* actually consisted in no meaning at all.[97] The three stories share a common idea: although they are drawn from the tradition of iconophiles (Buddhists, Catholics and Orthodox Church believers), under the form of iconoclastic metaphors they show relative inessentiality — Buddhists would rather say "insubstantiality", "emptiness" — of the things believed to be holy: prayers, *mantras*, koans, or relics used as a vehicle towards liberation/salvation. They warn of the dark side of *opus operatum*. It does not mean the substance of a holy thing is entirely and always meaningless. The point is that in the absence of man who would be able to genuinely embody the meaning even the most sacred substance will remain an inert particle of the matter. It is important to touch a sacred thing with "faith and confidence" no matter what it is made of. "He touched the head, eyes, ears, and mouth of an icon with faith and confidence and immediately became healed."[98] "(...)" he who ever makes a pilgrimage to this place and touches with faith a reliquary containing holy remains is endowed with the grace of healing his body and soul."[99] "Nectars in liquid, powder of pill forms are pre-

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[96] Seung Sahn, *Strzepując popiół na Buddę. Nauki Mistrza Zenu Seung Sahna* ['Ashes on Buddha', trans. unknown], n.p. 1990, p. 61-2.

[97] In: M. Eliade, *Yoga: Immortality and Freedom*, New York 1958, p. 216.

[98] Luźny, *Opowieść o niewiedzialnym mieście...*, p. 121.

[99] Ibidem, p. 134.

pared with esoteric rituals. It is believed that special attainments can
come just by tasting them with faith."[100] A believer's attitude, or just
an absurd prayer malapropism, may sacralize even a dog's tooth.[101]
On the other hand, the absence of faith paralyzes that which is sacred.
There is no possibility to degrade it, only to overshadow it. Neither the
power of substance nor a human wish for a miracle is the source of
sacredness. Sacredness itself is its own source.[102]

This fear of substantializing the sacred, leading straight to the
wilderness of idolatry, can be recognized in many unintelligible prac-
tises of great spiritual masters. Peter Metthiesen writes that "in Zen,
even a recitation of Buddha's golden words may be an obstacle in at-
taining enlightenment. Hence, you say (...) «Kill the Buddha!» The
holy book of Zen is nothing else but the universe itself."[103] This les-
son can be deduced from the behavior of crazy Tibetan yogins (Tib.:
dPa'bo, Zhig po, bLa ma smyon pa), Russian jurodiwyje, Byzantine
saloi and Muslim santons. Their behavior happens to radically chal-
lenge customs and religion; they ostentatiously destroy holy books and
monuments and reject commonly accepted norms of co-existence. To
celebrate enlightenment, one of them throws a rosary into a latrine,[104]
the other burns all sutras,[105] and another, after the night spent in a red-
light district, throws away a Zen master's garment and runs into the
street dancing barefoot and in rags.[106]

Another meaningful story, warning against idolatry, is told by
Daisetz Teitaro Suzuki. This story is about Tanka, who was put up
in the capital on a piercingly cold day. He took down one of the statues

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[100] Thondup, *Hidden Tradition...*, p. 100.

[101] M. M. Rhie, R. Thurman, *Wisdom and Compassion. The Sacred Art of Tibet*, San
Francisco 1991, p. 38.

[102] See the Heideggerian concept of art in *Der Ursprung des Kunstwerkes*.

[103] P. Mathiesen, *Śnieżna pantera* ['The Snowleopard', transl. by B. Kluczborska],
Warszawa 1988, p. 39

[104] Namkhai Norbu, *Dzogchen. The Self-perfected State* [transl. from the Tibetan by
J. Shane], London-Melbourne n.d., p. 64-65.

[105] Helmut Hoffman (*et al.*), *Tibet. A Handbook*, Bloomington (no date), passim.

[106] Seung Sahn, *Strzepując popiół na Buddę*, p. 49-50.

of Buddha kept at the temple and used it to light a fire to keep warm by. Raking in the ashes, he explained to the enraged temple caretaker that he was just taking out sacred śariras (Sanskrit *śarīra*, round crystalline stones, white or greenish in color, left behind when the corpse of a saint has been cremated). The keeper asked whether it was possible to find *śarīra*s in the wooden Buddha. Unruffled by the question, Tanka asked for another two more statues of Buddha to keep the fire burning.[107]

A Ban On Objectifying a Sacred Thing — The Foundation of Archaic Ontology

The religiosity of a holy simpleton, one of the *nepioi* Weil spoke about,[108] of stupid Johnny from European fables about three brothers (their Tibetan counterpart is the story about Ben from Kongpo), is the archetype of real devotion that successfully escapes the extremity of cynicism and idolatry. The following is an oral version of this history told by Chos kyi nyi ma Rin po che bla ma: "When [Ben] arrived at the Jowo temple, there was no one else around, but in front of the statue itself, he saw different kinds of food for that nice lama. Ben was not a very bright fellow and so he thought, «This must be food for that nice lama.» The statue had a smiling countenance and Ben said: «You must be a very good lama. You sit there so nice and quiet. You must be a really nice person and you have such a nice meal here to eat and butter lamps to keep warm by. You can dip the cakes and bread into the butter lamps and eat it.» But the statue didn't answer and it made no move to eat. So Ben thought: «Okay, if you are not going to eat it, I will.» The statue, of course, didn't protest, so Ben said: «Gee, you really are a good lama. I'm getting your dinner and you're not getting angry at me. But now I want to do a circumambulation[109] and one has to do it without shoes on so would you mind keeping an eye on my shoes?» The statue replied: «All right.» He put his shoes up on the altar and

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[107] D.T. Suzuki, *Wprowadzenie do buddyzmu zen* ['Introduction to the Zen-buddhism', transl. by M. Grabowski and A. Grabowska], Warszawa 1979, p. 164.

[108] Weil, *Pisma wybrane*, p. 109.

[109] Skr. *parikrama* or *pradakṣiṇa*.

started to walk around. When he reached the backside of the altar, the caretaker came in and saw the shoes on the altar. He thought: «What kind of disgusting maniac would put his filthy old shoes on the shrine? This is terrible!» He took them and was about to toss them out the door when the statue said, «Hey, don't throw those out. I am keeping them for the devoted Ben from Kongpo»."[110]

A monument or a painting which comes to life in the face of real devotion is one of the most distinct metaphors of overcoming distance between the subject and the object in religious experience. This devotion, rooted in religion's oldest internal harmony, restores order to the world. We identify all the features of archaic ontology in the attitude of a holy simpleton, a being that *is realized only an sich*, that is, *when it is not aware of itself as a being*.[111] The features include non-reflectiveness, an absence of consciousness of "self", a blessed state of calmed discursiveness. A simpleton can be a guide in the process of restoring a proper measure to things. It is better to call him a "doorkeeper" only because he must not be substantialized, or we will run the risk of falling into "Rousseau deviation," creating myths about "natural man," untouched by civilization. In order to avoid this danger let me quote Merton, who wrote that even an intellectual can be simple because "only a fool does not find the grace of real simplicity." Adiscursive devotion that restores disrupted archaic ontology, and religiosity that itself becomes a hierophany, does not entirely belong to simple or wild men living "someday, somewhere where men have never been." They happen to share it, but it is not given to them. Intellectuals also happen to experience this grace of devotion although they are in the minority. One has to be a man of remarkable intelligence to find an opening where others see only

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[110] Chos kyi nyi ma Rin po che, *The Union of Mahāmudrā and Mahāsandhi*, Kathmandu 1985, vol. I, p. 47-48.

[111] See: G. Scholem about "the hidden saints" (*nistar*) in every generation of Israel, saints hidden also before themselves, in: G. Scholem *Zur Kabbalah und ihrer Symbolik*, Frankfurt am Main 1960, p. 7 (lost in the English translation by R. Manheim, *On Kabbalah and its Symbolism*, New York 1965, p. 6-7).

"a silly mummery of unmeaning jargon and «magic circles»."[112] Only great intellect dares to question its own attitudes and accepts to yield to arational discipline.

Besides sophisticated intelligence that resolves to go beyond its own territory, this type of devotion requires the way to reach it. All of the above tools used to destroy discursiveness and to reduce and eradicate the trivial "self" become very helpful on this path. The "obscure mysticism of repetitions" is nothing more than a translation of the qualitative category of liberation through the senses into the language of quantity, a bewildering and endless multiplication that becomes a goal in itself. Both defy common sense and mock its claims and both also aspire to truth other than the truth which is mistaken for certitude.

Let us come back to the description of a "godly simpleton". Non-reflectiveness, "blissful ignorance", absence of "self" — all these terms are not yet accurate enough. A simpleton is the realization of the most fundamental — and as a result, almost impossible to express — prohibition on which the structure of archaic ontology is based: *a prohibition against objectifying or thematizing the sacred*, including sacrality personified by the simpleton. This is an explanation of the principle I have expressed before: to be a being that is realized only *an sich*. "Do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing" (Matt. 6.2.), the Gospel reads, and this is one of these commands of genuine devotion, that appear to be really universal.

Zen masters, zaddiks of Hasidism or Tibetan lamas never (or almost never) tell stories in the first person. They hardly happen to boast of mystical experiences, miracles or achievements in cultivating virtues.

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[112] L.A. Waddell, *Tibetan Buddhism With Its Mystic Cults, Symbolism and Mythology and Its Relation to Indian Buddhism*, New York 1972, p. 15. See also Waddel's similar statements on yoga (p. 12: "this Yoga parasite, containing within itself the germs of Tantricism, seized strong hold of its host and soon developed its monster outgrowths, which crushed and cranked most of the little life of purely Buddhist stock yet left in the Mahāyāna") and lamas (p. 573: "So it will be a happy day, indeed, for Tibet when its sturdy overcredulous people are freed from the intolerable tyranny of the Lāmas, and delivered from the devils whose ferocity and exacting whorship weight like a nightmare upon them"; transcription of the original).

It should be stressed that a psychological pseudo-explanation of this prohibition is not sought here. False epistemology, because it is based on *subiectum* (e.g., the consciousness of oneself as a benefactor, see the quoted example by Simone Weil), obviously ruins axiology, as it questions all good done and, moreover, poses a threat to ontology, the real way things exist. "Enlightenment which has been expressed is no enlightenment," a Zen text paradoxically puts it. "If someone says «I have attained enlightenment,» he is wrong."[113] "If someone wanted to school oneself in humbleness (...), he would never achieve real humbleness," Magid of Złoczów claims.[114] Let us recall in this context the question many Christians are haunted by: "As God, couldn't Jesus know who he really was?"[115] This doubt, caused by the fact that Jesus repeatedly evaded declaring his identity (cf. "And you, he asked, who do you say I am?", Mark 8.29) can be clarified anew in light of the command to not objectify the sacred. Jesus is not alone to abide by the command. One could find similar features in the behaviour of some other spiritual personages, like the Prophet Muhammad, cf. his unclear declaration "My religion is different from yours," attributed to him by the tradition, etc.

Let me exemplify this prohibition in a comical way. Duwyd, the hero of the *Periwinkle Wreath* by Stanisław Vincenz, tells how he un-learnt to thematize the sacred: "[T]here in Kossovo, they immediately sent me to a tough Hebrew school. They teach their own tough way; they start with the Bible right away. In the beginning the Bible reads: «Brejsz buru Elojhim es ha-szumaim wejs hu-erec» [Hebrew *Bereszit bara Elohim et haszammaim we et ha arec*, 'In the beginning God cre-ated heaven and earth', Genesis 1.1]. And what is my stupid head going to do? Instead of grasping it, I ask the teacher: «And what does 'Brejsz buru' mean?» He punches me in the face, gives me another blow with a thick book on my head and kicks in the behind: «That's what it means.»

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[113] Seung Sahn, *Strzepując popiół na Buddę*, p. 97.

[114] M. Buber, *Opowieści chasydów*, p. 120.

[115] F. Dreyfus, *Czy Jezus wiedział że jest Bogiem*, ['Did Jesus Know He Was God?', transl. by R. Rubinkiewicz], Poznań 1995.

I see stars. I am already in heaven. (. . .) I run to my daddy to complain. I cry and tell about everything, and he says calmly, «He did not hit you. He instructed you that you mustn't ask about sacred things. You must understand at once»."[116]

The Metaphors of Liberation

We have so far emphasised "senses" in liberation through the senses. The time has come to ask about "liberation". What does liberation through the senses imply?

Tibetan soteriology leads to the "state beyond suffering" called *nirvāṇa*. Liberation, or enlightenment, is the moment when this goal is attained. Practically speaking, it is when this state is identified in oneself, in one's eternal nature which, Buddhists claim, is freedom, the way good exists.

An outline of eschatology is included in the foundations of Buddhism, known as the "four noble truths": All existence is suffering; the cause of suffering is the illusion of "self"; freedom from suffering is *nirvāṇa*, the state beyond suffering; the fourth one shows the means of attaining *nirvāṇa*. As the illusion of "self" is said to be the cause of suffering, no wonder the metaphors of liberation show various forms of the emptiness of "self", its eradication and ultimate extinction.

Merton writes that as soon as man goes beyond the "self", he attains or rather "becomes enraptured by the wisdom" that annuls a division into the subject and the object.[117] The moment this division is overcome is expressed in a specific style heralding the proximity of the soteriological aim. There are only few and "indirect" records of this experience. They are allusions rather than testimonies and can be found in the style and climate of cultures, in people's behavior, and in the visual and linguistic imagination rather than in the direct records

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[116] S. Vincenz, *Prawda starowieku* ['The Truth of The Old Time'], Warszawa 1981, p. 396. See also ban on questions in Kabbalah-learning, G. Scholem, *On Kabbalah and its Symbolism*, p. 87.

[117] T. Merton, *Zapiski współwinnego widza* ['Conjectures of a Guilty Bystander', transl. by Z. Ławrynowicz, M. Maciołek], Poznań 1994, p. 409.

of religious experiences. All sources, in one way or another referring to this "state beyond words", stress a reversal of cognitive order, a shift of emphasis from "self" to "no-self". Let's discuss these metaphors of liberation included in:

a) universal religious stylistics emphasizing the extinction of "self", its kenosis, destruction,

b) the ontology of Tibetan painting and writing, which reduces the presence of a painter or an author,

c) a few accounts of the terminal experience itself in which "self" is ultimately destroyed.

a) Stylistics of the Extinction of "Self"

Let me start with examples Europeans are familiar with. "Will the pot contend with the potter, or the earthenware with the hand that shapes it? Will the clay ask the potter what he is making?" (Isa. 45.9). Mystic texts always stress the ontic advantage of sacredness over its adorer. In *Cherubinischer Wandersmann*, Angelus Silesius terms himself "the instrument the spirit is playing." The same figure is found in Clement of Alexandria, Jalaluddin Rumi or in the Platonian concept of divine inspiration (Greek *mania*) descending upon poets who become "God's interpreters in admiration." "He who prays ardently inside himself, in his throat God himself utters an inner word that matters. An outer word is only attire," zaddik Nahman of Bratslav says.[118] "I did not ascend (...) into heaven and did not see all God's works and creations, but heaven itself opened inside of me, and I knew God's works and creations in spirit," writes Jakob Böhme in *Aurora*.

Stigmatization, the marking of the body with wounds corresponding to those left on Christ's body, is a typical example of how emphasis is shifted from "self" to "no-self". Other examples include the mystic experience of Margaret Mary Alacoque (1647-1690) whose mortal heart was taken by Christ, "placed (...) inside of his own and inflamed,

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[118] M. Buber, *Opowieści rabina Nachmana* ['Die Erzählungen des Rabbi Nachman', transl. E. Zwolski], Paris 1983, p. 18.

and then replaced (...) in her breast."[119] There are similar accounts[120] by Dorota of Mątowy (1347-1394; her biographer writes: "Christ took her heart and gave a new one"), Teresa of Avila (1515-1582) and Veronica Guliani (1660-1727: "He who wants to belong to God must first die for himself," and "I really live only when I die for myself"). Equally spectacular cases of stigmatizations of Catholic saints include St. Francis of Assisi and Catherine of Siena,[121] as well as Father Pio, and Marthe Robin. Stigmatization is a clear symbol of abandoning "self" and belonging to what goes beyond self. The occurrence of this phenomenon is not limited to sensualist European religiosity, especially distinct in the post-Trent period. In Japan, there are representations of Zen patriarchs who part lappets on their breasts where the smiling face of Buddha is seen. Similar iconographic motives I have seen in Bumthang, Bhutan.

Exceptionally beautiful descriptions and accounts of the shift of "self" into "no-self", "epistemological reduction" and "the *epoché* of personality" are found in the tradition of painters, calligraphers and writers of haiku. It was said that the Chinese painter Jo-ku had forgotten about his body and turned into bamboo[122] while painting bamboos. Similar legends are preserved of haiku masters who were seen under the form of cranes, humming canes or a blossoming plum tree when writing poems. What finds expression in these stories is not just an empty convention or literary ornament. These metaphors anticipate a precise spiritual practice, conditioned by "the abandonment of one's self and transference into the object looked at, because only then can we grasp its «suchness»."[123] "Look at things from their point of view and you will see their real nature," an 11th-century Chinese philosopher said. "Look at things from your point of view and you will only

[119] W. James, *Varieties of Religious Experience*, New York 1958, p. 268.

[120] *Stygmatycy* ['Stigmatizations', transl. unknown], n.p. 1994, p. 46, 65, 82.

[121] G. Herling-Grudziński, *Dziennik pisany nocą* ['A Diary Written by Night'], Warszawa 1993, p. 32.

[122] F.S.C. Northrop, *The Meeting of the East and West*, New York 1959, p. 340.

[123] C. Miłosz, *Haiku* ['Haiku'], Warszawa 1992.

experience your own feelings because nature is neutral and clear while feelings are biased and obscure."[124] The Korean Zen master Soen Sa's statement is similar: "If you think intellect strays from this action, the course of your painting or writing will be blocked. (. . .) If you do not think, you and your action are one. You are the tea you are drinking, the paintbrush you are painting with."[125] A painting action, based on "no-self" and deprived of discursive duality, takes place in the abode of "archaic ontology", stems from this ontology, and invigorates it. It is hard to label it art (having in its name the allusion to what is "artificial"), it is rather creation, and its results may be regarded as *acheiropoietoi*, pictures not made by human hand. Such images "are God-sent", "come into life spontaneously" or by coincidence. They can be created by wind, rain, fire, or animals that are unaware of anything.[126]

b) "No-Self" in the Art and Tradition of Holy Books

The whole Tibetan art and writing tradition has the flavor of liberation from the illusion of "self". This tradition begins where European art ends, that is, at the confines of a being, at the treshold of the cognizable. Tucci writes that Tibetan iconometry has nothing in common with the canons of classical antiquity and it is not used to reproduce a certain ideal of beauty. He adds that man is not reckoned with at all in this utterly magical and transcendental painting. "Iconometry has liturgical value. It is like the map of a holy zone in which a priest has a ritual to perform."[127]

In the Tibetan world, man is not, contrary to what we were accustomed to believe in the post-Renaissance Europe, "the measure of all things." All things, including man but only one out of many, are equal in the eyes of the ontological absolute. In the world of archaic ontology,

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[124] Shao Jung, in: J. Needham, *Wielkie miareczkowanie. Nauka i społeczeństwo w Chinach i na Zachodzie* ['Great Titration. Science and Civilization in China', transl. by I. Kałużyńska], Warszawa 1984, p. 55.

[125] Seung Sahn, *Strzepując popiół na Buddę*, p. 84.

[126] Karma Thinley, *The History of the Sixteen Karmapas of Tibet*, Boulder 1980, p. 66-67.

[127] G. Tucci, *Tibetan Painted Scrolls*, Roma 1949, vol. I, p. 291.

this is a holy thing, the sign of the absolute (a painting, a monument or a text), that has power over whom it opens itself to. "No-self" is superior to "self". Buddhist paintings and texts work as if they were living beings. They select their readers and adorers, recognize and reject those actuated by questionable motives, and everybody is allowed into the understanding of only what he or she will be capable of comprehending. The being of a book or a painting always dominates the being of a spectator or a reader.

Tibet is rich in stories of the so-called *gTer ma*s, the treasure texts, buried by great spiritual masters[128] so that fragments of the tradition could be preserved in hiding till safer times. These carefully sealed books wait to be discovered. There are plenty of lists of these texts as well as prophecies about the circumstances of their discovery. The finders of these texts are called *gTer ston*s. A secret bond between each of them and the text allows them to understand its meaning in an original and unique way. *gTer ston*s are sometime named after the *gTer ma*s they discovered.[129] If we were to inquire about the meaning of this tradition, you could see in it the trace of the attitude religious people should develop in themselves in relation to a sacred object. Readers and even authors *belong* to the sacred texts which resonate inside of them. Although written by a human being, this book is eternal. It is substance-essence in relation to which man is but an affliction, the scribe of archetype.

The motive of the sealing of an esoteric text appears in stories about holy books. Only the chosen ones will read it. "John the Apostle is the only one who is allowed to read the heavenly book [The Revelation of St John]."[130] The motive of *The Book of Seth* appears in the apocryphal

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[128] All *gTer ston*s seem to belong to rNying ma pa school but I have once heard the XIVth Dalaj Lama talking about some other schools'*gTer ma*s.

[129] A similar custom is known in the tradition of Medieval Kabbalists (e.g. C. Vital) or Polish Hasids. J.J. Singer writes about Rabbi the Sage of Przemyśl, called the "Roar of a Bear", because of the book he published under this title, or about a Lublin rabbi, called "Seductive Baruch". J.J. Singer, *Josie Kałb*, Kraków 1992, p. 192.

[130] Lużny, *Opowieść o niewidzialnym mieście*, p. 61, n. 10.

Georgian Gospel; only the person who wrote and sealed it can look into it. Herod will fail in his efforts to open it.[131] In Vincenz, we find a very odd tale about the secret book Ba'al Shem Tov obtained from God. "The Dove Book of the World" is not defenseless against laymen. No one will touch it "because his hand will stop and wither. He will be saturated with only its smell. And light will emerge from it, like from a cloud, [the light of] the universal letters! One word can be taken from the Dove Book by one who is authorized to read it. And each of those who are authorised can take a different word. Two hermits will not read the same word. The whole life of a hermit will only be enough to read a single page of the Dove Book."[132]

The belief into "the sealing of the book" may be attributed to the naïveté of oral culture that treats the book rhematically and claims that from the perspective of an illiterate man its author is its only reader. One can understand this motive as the book's self-defense against being objectified. This may happen when it falls prey to all who can read.

This is also the case with a sacred painting. It comes to life only in the presence of genuine faith. Its existence predominates over the subjectivity of a painter or a spectator. Canon is the source of the painter's form while a meditative vision, a dream or an illumination[133] are the sources of canon. The artist's caprice, aesthetic idea or license is never such a source. Painting means producing and not creating. The act of creation cannot be rooted in such a wayward instance as the ego. This respect for the artist's theurgic power utterly excludes the idea of "production" in the same sense as is understood in Europe. A painter is not a creator but a reproducer of divine reality. He does not want to say "something new" with his art but rather something old. To represent the sacred well, he should be, as Vincenz says, "transparent

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[131] M. Starowieyski, *Apokryfy Nowego Testamentu* ['The New Testament Apocryphs'], Lublin 1988, vol. I, p. 158.

[132] S. Vincenz, *Barwinkowy wianek* ['Periwinkle Wreath '], Warszawa 1983, p. 330.

[133] D.P. Jackson, J.A. Jackson, *Tibetan Thangka Painting: Methods and Materials*, Boulder 1984, p. 12.

for creation", "poor", "without memory", "illiterate". The painter, like the zaddik assuming the name of his most important book, is to belong to the represented thing. He is to be a docile instrument, the scribe of archetype. Instead of referring to metaphors of the insignificance of the subject, a myth sometimes stresses its divinity. Then you can speak of the supernatural origin of sacral relics, paintings, monuments and books.[134] At stake is still the same "no-self", the reduction of the role of humans as their authors. Their "divinity" does not matter. What matters is that they are "not human", "not-made-by-human-hand".

c) The Destruction of "Self" in the Terminal Experience

There are few "autobiographical" accounts of enlightenment in Buddhism. They are eliminated from the tradition by a prohibition against thematizing the sacred, including one's own religious experiences. These accounts of liberation, written down by disciples, emphasize the same motive we come across in Buddhist art, that is, the extinction of "self". The following is an account of how the Korean Zen master Soen Sa attained enlightenment. "The hundredth day [of solitary *sūtra* meditation and recitation] came at last. As usual, Soen Sa chanted and tapped on *moktak* [the wooden instrument used as a drum to set the rhythm for Buddhist chanting]. Suddenly, his body *vanished*, and he found himself in infinite space (...). When he returned to a bodily state, he came to understand. The rocks and rivers, and all he could see and hear were his true 'self'. All things were exactly the way they were."[135]

This is the account of the terminal experience of the ordinary man Heishiro, who did not meditate longer than three days. "He kept sitting all night and when he heard birds sing at dawn, *he could not find his body*. He felt as if his eyes had dropped to earth. (...) When he suddenly saw a panoramic sight of the coast, he fully understood that all creatures, leaves of grass, trees and birds were a Buddha from the

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[134] W. Juszczak, *Fragmenty*, p. 129.
[135] Thondup, *Hidden Teachings of Tibet...*, p. 252, n. 211.

beginning."[136] "At this moment — this is still the account of Ko Bong's enlightenment — I felt as if the universe had fallen to pieces, and the earth was flat. There was no 'self' and no world. As if two mirrors reflected each other. I assigned myself a few koans, and answers were through-out clear."[137]

Reports of great masters' enlightenment express the terminal experience in the most radical language. The subject simply vanishes and only the hierophanic universe is left. In the story about Ko Bong, both the subject and the object were removed but only to offer us the favourite metaphor of Far Eastern iconoclasts, as the double emptiness of mirrors set against each other.

Disappearance is the most distinct metaphor of no "self" and the simplest sign of full liberation. I stress: at stake is a metaphor and a sign, not the evaluation of facts. The manifestation of the so-called "rainbow body" (Tibetan *'Ja lus*) is a metaphorical sign of the end of "self". According to Tibetan tradition, *Ja lus* is demonstrated at the death of *rDzogs chen* masters, who practise the so-called rainbow body meditation. This is an account of the death of one of the masters: "During the weekend, Nyagla Padma Dydyl told everybody that the time of his death was drawing near (. . .) all his disciples went with him to the mountain and he erected a small tent. He told them to sew up and seal the tent, and he wanted to be left alone for seven days. The disciples went down and waited for seven days in a camp at the foot of the mountain. At that time it started to rain heavily and many rainbows appeared. The disciples returned to the mountain and opened the tent the way they had left it, but all they found were the master's clothes, his hair and his nails. His clothes were at the place where he had sat and were still fastened with a belt. He left them like a snake shed its skin."[138]

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[136] Seung Sahn, *Strzepując*, p. 150.

[137] *Kurz zen. Mała antologia japońska* ['Dust of Zen', ed. by M. Fostowicz-Zahorski], Wrocław 1992, p. 98.

[138] *Śmierć i umieranie. Wybór tekstów z tradycji buddyzmu tybetańskiego, bon i therawady na temat śmierci i procesu umierania* ['Death and Dying', transl. and ed. by J. Sieradzan], Katowice 1994, p. 263-274.

Another account concerns the signs of ultimate liberation, demonstrated by the man never suspected of spiritual achievements. It is told by his son, the monk: "After a few days, on the evening of the seventh day of the fourth month of the Water-Dragon Year (1952), my father died at the age of 79. A lama told my brother that relatives should care for the body in a special way, but nobody understood what he meant. Shortly after his death, they began to care for the body as if it had belonged to an ordinary man. Soon they noticed the rainbow light and coloring of the tents surrounding the place where the body rested while the body began to shrink. (. . .) After a few days, his whole mortal body dissolved. I swiftly finished my solitary retreat and came back home. At that time, the process of dissolution came to an end, and only twenty nails and hair were left at the place where his body had been kept."[139]

The death of Tibetan yogin Togden Orgyen Tenzin (?ldan O rgyan bsTan 'dzin?) was the most remarkable disappearance. He died after he had been imprisoned by the Chinese in 1984. This is what Norbu Lama says: "One of the officials supervising Togden Orgyen Tenzin said that when he had come to the yogin's room, he saw his body sitting in meditation, but it shrank to the size of a child. The official panicked because he had no idea how to explain this fact to his superiors. He was afraid that nobody would believe the story, and that he would be accused of complicity in the escape. He immediately went to submit a report on the whole case to the superiors. When he and high-ranking officers returned to Togden's house a few days later, Togden's body had entirely disappeared. Only hair and nails were left."[140]

Perhaps this is the way the road indicated by liberation through the senses comes to an end. It concludes with a radical disappearance of the subject, which is the most remarkable metaphor of Buddhist liberation. The road we took to trace the mystical experience of Simone Weil had begun with the decision to kill the "self", the discursive part of the soul. Repetition was a weapon to destroy it. We saw how

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[139] Ibidem, p. 269.

[140] Namkhai Norbu, *The Crystal and The Way of Light. Sutra, Tantra and Dzogchen*, New York-London 1986, p. 126-128.

repetition, strictly observing the prohibition against thematization of the sacred (asking about the sense of a text, ritual, or a painting), successfully destroyed discursiveness. This ban concerned both the content of a prayer, *mantra* and *dhāraṇī*, and the analysis of the matter of an image, or a relic or the ascertainment of its own religious experiences. Rhematic religiosity, focused exclusively on the matter (rheme) of sacred things, is realized in the logic of this prohibition. Discursiveness, fed for some time by the pure form and the matter of rhematic religiosity, rapidly exhausts itself and gives up. Only then does real sacredness comes into view through the filter of the perfectly purified self that has undergone kenotic (Greek *kenōsis* — 'emptying, shedding') transformation. This is no longer the sacredness of the righteous in a spoiled world but, after all the traces of subjective-objective distance are gone, the sacredness of the world that has been saved. It seems that this is the sense of disappearance Weil longed for and, perhaps, the ultimate sense of liberation through the senses. Only after the "self" has disappeared will the creator and the creation, regardless of their name, be able to "exchange their secrets".[141] "Let me disappear," Weil prayed, "so that the things I can see become perfectly beautiful as they will no longer be the things seen by me." In Christianity, this vision of the saved world is called *apokatastasis panton*. In Buddhism, wholly oriented to the other side of existence, nobody even makes an attempt to name it.

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[141] Weil, *Pisma wybrane*, p. 115.

BOOK REVIEWS

GERRIE TER HAAR, *Halfway to Paradise: African Christians in Europe* —
Cardiff: Cardiff Academic Press 1998 (vi + 220 p.) ISBN 1-899025-03-0,
£ 16,95.

In the early 1980s, young Ghanaians began to travel to Europe and
Northern America in numbers, following a well established tradition of
migration for the purpose of seeking employment and economic success
elsewhere (4, 73-76, 87, 132-133, 135ff.). Germany and The Nethelands
proved main destinations. The Netherlands now has slightly over 15,000
Ghanaians with permits and several thousands more without documents
(126). Their presence is generally not a conspicuous one (126-127). One
trait has, however, become noticeable: the great number of 'African Initiated
Churches' (AICs), that have sprung up among them. Some forty existed in
Amsterdam alone in 1997. These churches are the main subject of study
of Ter Haar's book, and more in particular 'The True Teachings of Christ's
Temple' church in 'the Bijlmer' (SE Amsterdam), the oldest and largest of
these congregations with some 600 regular members.

Ter Haar's book has ten chapters. Chapter 1 is a methodological intro-
duction in which she critically discusses the subtle mechanisms of exclusion
operating in e.g. an emphasis on the 'Africanness' of these churches. Against
symbolist anthropologists, she insists that their theologies need also be stud-
ied for properly understanding the important social functions they have for
their members (6-7, 10-12). In chapters 2, she looks at 'the Bijlmer' — the
multi-ethnic part of Amsterdam to which many Ghanaians have flocked —,
its religious communities and their social functions. She contends that "reli-
gious faith can also constitute a successful social strategy" (45), for it creates
a sense of belonging, and a place to be at home, for many migrants. How
precisely their bible-centred approach creates a supportive, inclusive commu-
nity is analysed in chapter 3, in which Ter Haar also examines their notions
of 'spirit', 'power' and 'prosperity', and the role of ritual in obtaining one's
share in them in the diaspora which is a situation of liminality. In chapter 4,
she surveys the history, past and present, of the 'dispersal' of Africans outside
Africa and criticises the mechanisms of inclusion and exclusion inherent in
the uses of the concept of 'diaspora'. They serve to exclude when its three key

notions of dispersal (forced or voluntary), cultivation of an 'African' identity, and the wish to return 'home' (80) are attributed to the migrants, but not cultivated by the migrants themselves, as is the case with many migrants in Europe (82-88, 159-167). The history and present distribution of the AICs in Europe is examined in chapter 5. Chapter 6 discusses the attempts of 'fortress Europe' to stem the 'flood' of immigrants, particularly the so called 'economic refugees' without permits, often smuggled in by human trafficking. The 'exodus' from Africa to Europe is discussed in greater detail in chapter 7 with an emphasis on the migrants from Ghana and their cultural organisations in the Netherlands. The reactions of the mainline churches in the Netherlands and in Ghana to this phenomenon are studied in chapter 8, as is that of a Ghanaian pentecostal church, the Resurrection Power and Living Bread Ministries, which established a branch in Amsterdam and is now one of the larger AICs there. The Dutch mainline churches have emphasised the Africanness of the AICs. By 'othering' them they practise a modern mode of racism (161-167). In chapter 9, Ter Haar surveys the history of Christianity in Ghana, including its bewildering variety of AICs, which constitute the major influence in the religious developments among Ghanaians in Europe. She points out that 'fundamentalism' is another of the several dubious categories and labels that have bedevilled the study of AICs (185-188). In chapter 10, she concludes the book by showing from the example of the Bijlmer that AICs do have an important social function for migrants from Africa in the modern cities of Europe.

This is a well-written and excellently documented book with a sure grasp of both long range historical developments and the baffling complexities of the present day situation, religious and political. I have two reservations. One is that the 'reverse mission' (1-3) seems, so far, to be for internal use only. It seems to serve as one of several optional means of identity construction by which a 'community of elect' may separate itself ideologically from 'immoral' Western society into which it fervently wishes to integrate economically. The other reservation respects Ter Haar's somewhat indiscriminate polemics against the social-scientific studies of AICs in Africa and Europe by 'secular' anthropologists who "consider religious belief and religious practice as mere representations of the secular" (5, 6; also 7, 9, 10, 164). I feel more at ease with her admission that "the study of religious phenomena in Africa [as] a branch of scientific inquiry [...] has been revolutionised by the insights of anthropology" (8).

All in all, however, this is a well-written book on an important development in the history of both African and European religiosity. It lays bare some of the well-hidden mechanisms of identity construction as a means for survival as well as for imposing an identity upon others in order to separate, exclude and expulse them. It is important for the academic study of religions both for its substance and the methodology it advocates.

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MARIO VITALONE, *The Persian Revāyat "Ithoter". Zoroastrian Rituals in the Eighteenth Century* — Napoli: Istituto Universitario Orientale (Dipartimento di Studi Asiatici. Series Minor. XLIX) 1996 (301 p.).

The Parsi communities of India had held good relations with the Iranian Zoroastrians during the 15th to 18th centuries as shown by a relatively large number of letters sent from India to Iran asking for advice mainly in matters concerning rituals. One of these letters, called revāyat, has been studied and edited by M. Vitalone in the present book originating from his doctorate dissertation in Iranian Studies at the University of Naples (Italy). The main parts of the book are an introduction, edition of the Persian text with a critical apparatus relating to differences between the only two surviving manuscripts (one from the year 1797, the other one together with a translation of the text in Gujarati language with no precise date), translation of the Persian text with commentary and a glossary of selected terms.

"Ithoter" ("seventy eight" in Gujarati) is the name of this revāyat because it contains seventy eight questions put by the Qadimi community from Surat to the *dasturān* of Yazd and Kerman in Iran. During the 17th century it became known that there existed differences concerning the cultic calenders in Iran and India which did not pose any problems until 1722 when lay people in Surat for the first time argued for the Iranian calender as the "old" (*qadimi*) and hence the correct one and therefore started using it. A split of the communities did not happen until 1745 and in order to get a definite answer regarding the calender, Mulla Kaus Jalal was sent to Iran in 1768 to settle this question carrying with him 78 questions elaborated by the *dasturān* of Broach and Surat. The questions and their respective answers

were brought back to India only 12 years later when Jalal returned. It is interesting to note that the Iranian *dasturān* did not give any answer to the main purpose of Jalal's visit to Iran regarding the calendar because they had already given their opinion on previous occasions. Thus this question remained unsolved — until today one of the main controversies among Parsi communities are the different calenders: the qadimi, the shāhānshāhi and in addition since the early 20th century the fasli. — For the history of Zoroastrianism it is worthy to mention that these questions concerning the "right" and "wrong" calenders brought an end to three hundred years of regular contacts between the Parsi and Irani communities. The revāyat "Ithoter" is the last letter from India and the last answer from Iran. Only one century later contacts between Parsis and Iranis had been renewed again.

The central topics of the 78 questions are purity, funeral practices, women and their menses, sexuality and pollution, sacred fires, priesthood and conversion. As Zoroastrianism has often been understood as a religion deeply connected with ritualism it is necessary to put our attention to this revāyat which shows — comparable to other ones — that there has always been a plurality of ritualism among Indian Parsis and Iranian Zoroastrians (which holds true till present times), but also among local communities. It is also interesting to observe that topics very much discussed among contemporary communities have already been discussed two hundred years earlier, e.g. the question of apointment to priesthood or the question of conversion to the Zoroastrian religion. The 7th and 39th question of the revāyat focus on the hereditary priesthood and problems resulting from this, mainly the poor knowledge of those sons of priests who are initiated to priesthood although they are not inclined to it. The answer by the Iranians that a priest's son before being initiated to priesthood must know at least the whole Yasna and the Visprat is an attempt to make the situation better. The often limited knowledge of priests concerning their religion has posed problems to the authority of priests within their community until the 20th century. — An important question has been raised by the Qadimis of Surat regarding conversion of Indian slaves which has been prohibited by the Parsi priests; in their answer the Iranian *mowbeds* favor such conversions as has also been the case in earlier revāyats. Until recent years this different stance concerning conversion has been upheld as the Iranian Zoroastrians (and Iranian *mowbeds* in countries of the recent western di-

aspora) who — seldom — accept non-Zoroastrians to join their religion while Parsi priests think this being impossible. — We thus can observe that not only present questions have their age-long tradition, but that revāyats also can maybe help to answer such questions. Therefore the edition of the revāyat "Ithoter" by M. Vitalone is not only an important contribution to our knowledge of Zoroastrian thought and ritual during the second half of the 18th century but also may have its bearing for contemporary Zoroastrianism.

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DONALD D. LESLIE, *Jews and Judaism in Traditional China: A Comprehensive Bibliography* (Monumenta Serica Monograph, XLV) — St. Augustin 1999 (291 p.) ISBN 3-8050-0418-4, DM 65.00.

The history of the Jews in China (there clearly was some Jewish presence already under the T'ang), including that of the better known Kaifeng community (ca. 12th-19th cent.), hardly figures among the major themes in religious studies. Nevertheless the Kaifeng Jews found their way even into *NUMEN* (see vol. XLII, 1995, p. 118 ff.). The subject is, perhaps, more sociological in nature: a Jewish community that disappeared as a result not of expulsion, extermination or suppression but (unlike the Chinese Muslims who succeeded in creating a kind of spiritual ghetto) of total and successful assimilation. Their existence came to the notice of the western world in the 17th cent. only, thanks to Matteo Ricci and his successors. Ignorant of the Kaifeng community's medieval origins (via the Silk Road from Persia), the Jesuits believed them to have come during the Second Temple period and therefore to possess the original version of the Hebrew Bible, as yet unfalsified by the rabbis who expunged all explicit references to Jesus Christ. It is curious that the Jesuits of all people should have deviated from the mainline tradition (St. Jerome!) that the *hebraica veritas* was the authentic Old Testament and rather embraced the very marginal view, first attested by Justin Martyr and repeated as late as the end of the 16th cent. by the Faculty of Theology of Mainz which advised the Emperor to burn not only the Talmud but also all Hebrew Bibles.

The undisputed expert on Chinese Jewry is Prof. Donald D. Leslie, and his long awaited (and completely up-to-date) "comprehensive bibliography"

has at last seen the light of day. Nobody dealing with the Kaifeng (and other Chinese) Jews can henceforth do without this volume on his shelf.

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THE EXCLUSION OF WOMEN IN THE MITHRAIC MYSTERIES: ANCIENT OR MODERN?

JONATHAN DAVID

Summary

The following paper deals with the scholarly supposition that females were excluded from the ancient mystery cult of Mithraism. This notion has been part of scholarly dialogue about the religion since Franz Cumont, the father of modern Mithraic studies, introduced it in the late nineteenth century. Though many of his conclusions about Mithraism have been challenged or refuted in the past thirty years, the particular idea that the cult excluded women has persisted, and actually has become taken for granted by most scholars. Thanks to the publication of much important archaeological and epigraphical evidence during the past fifty years, a reexamination of this notion is now possible. By surveying a few examples of Mithraic inscriptions and iconography in light of heretofore discounted textual clues from such ancient authors as Porphyry, Jerome, and Tertullian, it will be argued that the theory of universal female exclusion from Mithraism is untenable. In order to demonstrate this, it will be necessary to challenge and scrutinize the work of the only modern scholar to explore gender within ancient Mithraism, Richard Gordon. Instead of starting from a preconceived notion of exclusion and attempting to explain away the various exceptions to this rule, this article will tally these "exceptions" to conclude simply that women were involved with Mithraic groups in at least some locations of the empire. Some possible implications of this conclusion then will be suggested.

"Small autonomous groups of initiates, *exclusively male*, met for fellowship and worship in chambers of modest size and distinctive design which they called 'caves'..."[1] With this statement in the *Oxford Classical Dictionary*, Roger Beck echoes the conventional characteristics of the Mithraic mysteries as they have been repeated since at least the nineteenth century. Regardless of what else of

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[1] Roger Beck, s. v. "Mithras," in S. Hornblower and A. Spawforth, eds., *Oxford Classical Dictionary*, 3rd edition (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), my emphasis.

Cumont's comprehensive treatment has eroded under the tempests of recent scholarship,[2] these simple, stock attributes remain reassuringly stable amidst the chaos of competing astrological theories concerning origins and cosmogonies. But precisely why have these particular aspects not evolved, mutated, or passed away? The 'caves' notion has always been well supported by the abundance of cave-like *mithraea* discovered and described by archaeology, and the fact that this was a cult with initiates, worship, and fellowship is quite obvious. This paper will focus on and challenge the long-standing idea that women were actively excluded from the Hellenistic mystery cult of Mithras.

Despite the evidence to be reviewed in the following pages, several of the most recent popular books on ancient mystery cults characterize Mithraism as exclusively male. Indeed, this exclusion seems to have become a feature commonly assigned to the religion, distinguishing it from other Hellenistic cults. Therefore, it may prove useful to cover a few of these briefly. In his 1987 monograph on mystery religions, Walter Burkert accepts the idea in a passing mention and even goes so far as to assert that Mithras "stood for men's clubs in opposition to family life."[3] Robert Turcan, in the newest edition of his textbook on Roman cults, explicitly states that women were excluded from the rites of Mithras, and, due to the view's status as *opinio communis*, he

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[2] Franz Cumont, *Textes et monuments figurés relatifs aux mystères de Mithra*, 2 vols. (Brussels: H. Lamertin, 1896, 1899). See also Franz Cumont (translated by T. McCormack), *The Mysteries of Mithra* (London: Kegan Paul, 1903); Roger Beck, "Mithraism since Franz Cumont," *ANRW II* 17.4 (1984), 2002-2115.

[3] Walter Burkert, *Ancient Mystery Cults* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1987), 43; (quotation) 52. Kurt Latte, in his fundamental reference work *Römische Religionsgeschichte* (München: Beck, 1960), states simply that "*es war eine männliche Religion.*" The notion seems to have gained ground and relevance in the past few decades. For example, Luther Martin outlines a Mithras cult "to which only males were admitted": *Hellenistic Religions: An Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), 114. See my discussion below, especially Richard Gordon, "Reality, evocation and boundary in the Mysteries of Mithras," *Journal of Mithraic Studies* 3 (1980), 42-63; W. Liebeschuetz, "The expansion of Mithraism among religious cults of the second century," in J.R. Hinnells, ed., *Studies in Mithraism* (Rome: "L'Erma" di Bretschneider, 1994), 202.

omits to rehearse the relevant evidence.[4] Most recently, Mary Beard, John North, and Simon Price have wholeheartedly accepted the view of previous scholars concerning this issue in their useful textbook on Roman religion.[5] Three other studies specifically concerning women in Graeco-Roman religions have echoed the presumed exclusivity of Mithraism, and furthermore, this notion has even filtered down into more general textbooks.[6]

The exclusion of women from the Mithraic mysteries has come to be accepted as one of the fundamental facts about the cult, but on what ancient evidence is this notion founded? The most frequently cited textual evidence comes from the third century Neo-Platonist Porphyry, in his work *De abstinentia* (4.16):

τὴν γὰρ κοινότητα ἡμῶν τὴν πρὸς τὰ ζῷα αἰνιττόμενοι διὰ τῶν ζῴων ἡμᾶς μηνύειν εἰώθασιν· ὡς τοὺς μὲν μετέχοντας τῶν αὐτῶν ὀργίων μύστας λέοντας καλεῖν, τὰς δὲ γυναῖκας λεαίνας, τοὺς δὲ ὑπηρετοῦντας κόρακας.[7]

For, explaining in riddles our commonality with animals, they are accustomed to reveal us according to [names of] animals; so that they call those initiates participating in the same rites lions, and the women lionesses, and the attendants ravens.

Porphyry thus gives a brief description of the names by which presumably Mithraic initiates or participants (μετέχοντες μύσται) and underling attendants (ὑπηρετοῦντες) were called: lions (λέοντες) and

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[4] Robert Turcan (translated by A. Nevill), *The Cults of the Roman Empire* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1996), 240.

[5] Mary Beard, John North and Simon Price, *Religions of Rome, Volume I: A History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 298.

[6] Women: A. Staples, *From Good Goddess to vestal Virgins: sex and category in Roman religion* (London: Routledge, 1998); D.F. Sawyer, *Women and Religion in the First Christian Centuries* (London: Routledge, 1996); R.S. Kraemer, *Her Share of the Blessings: Women's Religions among Pagans, Jews, and Christians in the Greco-Roman World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992); textbooks: see Jackson J. Spielvogel, *Western Civilization, Volume A, Second Edition* (Minneapolis: West Publishing Company, 1994), 189.

[7] See Augustus Nauck, *Porphyrii Philosophi Platonici Opuscula Selecta* (Hildesheim: Georg Olms Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1963), 254.

ravens (κόρακες), respectively. But the overall reading of this passage presents a problem, due to a dispute in the manuscript traditions: Porphyry also states that women were called either hyenas (ὕαιναι) or lionesses (λέαιναι).[8] Complicating the issue is the fact that the text is obviously corrupt, actually missing a significant portion of the very next line.[9] The theory of a female Mithraic grade of Lionesses has been suggested, but never fully pursued.[10] Richard Gordon has treated the passage at length, concluding that it should read "hyenas," and

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[8] Ibid. I.B. Felicianus (c. 1547) prints λεαίνας, perhaps an emendation. Nauck follows Felicianus, while the mss. tradition gives ὑαίνας.

[9] Nauck correctly provides ellipses in the next sentence, for, as Rudolph Hercher (Paris, 1858) first noticed, the γάρ in sixth position seems to indicate that the end of the sentence has been lost. David Engel (personal conversation) has suggested the possibility of the γάρ being spurious, with its omission rendering the sentence intelligible.

[10] See John Ferguson, "More About Mithras," *Hibbert Journal* 53 (1955), 319-326. For a response to the notion, see J.M.C. Toynbee, "Still More About Mithras," *Hibbert Journal* 54 (1956), 107-114. For the evidence cited in these suggestions, see J.M. Reynolds and J.B. Ward Perkins, *The Inscriptions of Roman Tripolitania* (1952), no. 239; M.J. Vermaseren, *Corpus Inscriptionum et Monumentorum Religionis Mithriacae, vols. 1 and 2* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1956, 1960), nos. 113-115 [henceforth *CIMRM 1* or *CIMRM 2*]. The names of the seven grades of Mithraism have generally been taken from Jerome, *Epist.* 107.2 (*ad Laetam*): "... *nonne specu Mithrae et omnia portentuosa simulacra, quibus corax, nymphus, miles, leo, Perses, heliodromus, pater initiantur...* " It should be noted that "*nymphus*" is a modern emendation on the basis of *CIL* 6, nos. 751-53 (annotated edition in H. Dessau, *Inscriptiones Latinae Selectae* [Dublin: apud Weidmannos, 1974], 4267a-e), which presumably record some mid-fourth century Mithraic initiations at Rome. The mss. of Jerome have "*gryphus*," which I. Hilberg, *Sancti Evsebii Hieronymi Epistvlae* (Vindobonae: F. Tempsky, 1910-1918), and J. Labourt, *Lettres/Texte établi et traduit par Jérôme* (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1949-1963), emend to "*cryphius*" in their critical editions. See also the *mithraeum* of Felicissimus at Ostia, in *CIMRM 1*, no. 299; or M.J. Vermaseren (translated by T. and V. Megaw), *Mithras, the Secret God* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1963), 138-153, which visually illustrates these grades and their related iconography. For helpful descriptions and illustrations of this important mosaic, see Carlo Pavolini, *Guide archaeologiche Laterza #8: Ostia* (Rome & Bari: Laterza, 1983), 218-219; or Beard, North, and Price (*Volume II*), 305-306.

that women were indeed excluded from the mysteries, even actively despised by the cult.[11] Despite Gordon's argument, the possibility of women participating in the mysteries remains quite substantial, as the following evidence will show. As for the lioness/hyena question, let it suffice to point out that the plentiful iconographic evidence from various *mithraea* across the empire depicts not one hyena. Lionesses, however, are present in a number of Mithraic contexts, for example at Angleur in Gaul and at Scarabantia in Pannonia.[12]

Some of the most suggestive evidence along these lines comes from Oea (Tripoli) in northern Africa. The site is not a *mithraeum*, but a set of two sepulchres dating to approximately the late third century CE. This painted tomb of a wealthy couple is covered with Mithraic iconography, bearing similarities with Mithraic sites elsewhere, and also depicting a lioness. But most striking are the painted texts on the tops of the two sarcophagi. The man's clearly reads "*qui leo iacet*," and the woman's, "*quae lea iacet*."[13] This, combined with the additional iconography (see below) all around the tomb, seems to suggest that not only was the man a Mithraic initiate of the grade *leo*, but also that his wife was a participant as well, initiated into a grade *lea*, lending additional support to one of the two readings of Porphyry's passage. M.J. Vermaseren, in his popular book on Mithras, has given this evidence the fairest treatment, suggesting that the tomb indeed holds the remains of an initiate of the grade Lioness.[14] He goes on to conclude, however, that this was a marginal sect, that the "Mithraic community of Oea would be the only one in the West where women were admitted in the various grades; all our other sources speak only of men, and where a woman's name is mentioned in an inscription she

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[11] Gordon, 42-63. See my discussion below.

[12] *CIMRM 1*, no. 962; *CIMRM 2*, no. 1640. See below.

[13] *CIMRM 1*, nos. 113-115. See also *CIMRM 2*, nos. 113-115; Reynolds and Perkins, no. 239. Originally these epitaphs were published as *inscriptions* on the tops of *funerary urns*. For the later correction, see J.M. Reynolds, "IRT: Supplement," *PBSR* 23 (1955), 124 ff.

[14] Vermaseren (1963), 162-165.

never bears a title."[15] Considering only the material readily available forty years ago, this analysis would be quite sound, but we shall see as the evidence accrues that this sepulchre is much more than simply the exception that proves the rule.

This tomb at Oea, as mentioned above, shares iconographical similarities with various other Mithraic sites. Most notably, next to the burial niche on the left sidewall, there is depicted a striding person in a long garment with a raised candlestick in his right hand.[16] "This same figure," as Vermaseren puts it, appears in a depiction of a procession with lions in the Santa Prisca *mithraeum* at Rome.[17] The iconography of the two sites is quite similar, in general,[18] suggesting a possible link between the couple of Oea and the roughly contemporary *mithraeum* in Rome. Most striking, however, is the discovery of a marble bust of a woman in the Santa Prisca *mithraeum*, just behind the door. What was the purpose of this small (16 cm) statue? Could it have been a sympathetic votive offering, given by an initiate? Could the bust actually depict an initiate, or a benefactor of the sanctuary? This *Roman* Mithraic group, even though its sanctuary contains a representation of a woman, cannot be interpreted as a marginal sect as well. A similar problem is posed by the carved group of mother and child discovered in the *mithraeum* at Dieburg in Roman Germany,[19] and the crude female statuette from inside the *mithraeum* at Carrawburgh on Hadrian's Wall.[20]

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[15] Ibid., 163.

[16] *CIMRM 1*, no. 113.

[17] M.J. Vermaseren and C.C. Van Essen, *The Excavations in the Mithraeum of the Church of Santa Prisca in Rome* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1965), 150; pl. LV. Quote: Vermaseren (1962), 163.

[18] Cf. Vermaseren and Van Essen, 148-150 ff., with Reynolds and Perkins, no. 239. See also *CIMRM 1*, no. 113.

[19] F. Behn, *Das Mithrasheiligtum zu Dieburg* (Berlin: W. de Gruyter & Co., 1928), 35, no. 14 (fig. 39). See also Toynbee, 109.

[20] I.A. Richmond and J.P. Gillam, *The Temple of Mithras at Carrawburgh* (Newcastle upon Tyne: Society of Antiquaries, 1951), 30 (pl. 10A).

The *lea* inscription from Oea, combined with the iconographical representations of both lionesses and women, raises the question of whether there exist other textual references to women in relation to Mithraism, beyond Porphyry's possible mention of a Lioness grade of initiation (which, regardless of the reading, clearly implies women's association with the cult). There do indeed. Tertullian, in *De prae-scriptione haereticorum* (40), mentions "*virgines*" and "*continentes*" as devoted to Mithras, indicating his awareness not only that some initiates habitually abstained from sex in honor of the god, but also that both males and females were involved in this, *virgines et continentes*. While Tertullian is generally believed to be somewhat inaccurate in his treatment of the Mithraic rites,[21] we must, in light of our other evidence, grant some credence to the implication that women were involved with the cult, regardless of whether some of them abstained from the sexual act or not.[22] The strongest examples reviewed so far, namely Tertullian and the Oea tomb, may point toward a specifically North African variant of Mithraism in which women were involved, as Tertullian's *exempla* are generally African. There are, however, supplementary hints from elsewhere in the empire.

Perhaps the most suggestive additional evidence comes from an inscription by a slave woman in Rome named Cascelia Elegans. This clearly legible prayer was inscribed on a small altar (20 cm) and addressed to a male deity simply invoked as "*Domine aeterne.*"[23] Thus the provenance of this third century CE inscription becomes extremely important, for it was found near the main altar of a *mithraeum* within the Castra Peregrina, on the site of the present-day S. Stefano Rotondo in Rome.[24] Gerard Mussies has produced the most extensive analysis of the first several lines of the prayer, and his conclusions concerning

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[21] For example, see Burkert, 99. For general acceptance of Tertullian's descriptions on the basis of his father being a Mithraic initiate, see Turcan (1996), 234.

[22] Cf. Vermaseren (1962), 164. Again, see Turcan (1996), 231-235; 244.

[23] Gerard Mussies, "Cascelia's Prayer," in U. Bianchi and M.J. Vermaseren, eds, *La soteriologia dei culti orientali nell' Impero Romano* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1982), 156.

[24] Ibid.

the authorship, nature, and purpose of the inscription remain unchallenged.[25] He argues that the inscribed altar was addressed to the syncretistic Sol-Mithras-Aion by a "simple slave woman," and he further suggests that this act may have been undertaken at the sanction of her patron, who was perhaps a high functionary in the cult.[26]

Unfortunately, Mussies does not take this opportunity to explore the possibility of female participants in the cult, but rather echoes the traditional view:

> Women, however, were not admitted to the mysteries of the Persian god. But this fact alone should not lead us to the conclusion that the god whom Cascelia invokes can therefore not be Mithras, for it is thinkable that although they were not admitted, they were yet allowed to have inscriptions or sculptures placed in the sanctuary, or could make donations to the community of which their husbands or sons were members.[27]

Mussies cites no evidence for his initial statement, however, he *does* go on to cite three other Mithraic inscriptions naming women as the sponsors. The first is from a second century CE *mithraeum* at Ostia, stating that the "*mater*" Junia Zosime made a gift to the Dendrophori college.[28] The second, from Mediolanum, is inscribed on a similarly dedicated altar, and while its divine addressee has been disputed, it was unquestionably made by a woman.[29] The third is a stone dedication to

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[25] Ibid., 156-167. The complete text, with photographs and discussion, has been published by Silvio Panciera, "Il materiale epigrafico dallo scavo di S. Stefano Rotondo," in U. Bianchi, ed., *Mysteria Mithrae* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1979), 97-112.

[26] Ibid., 158; 163. Mussies deduces this from the phrase "*pro domino meo Primo,*" which would appear to make reference to her owner, Primus, for whose benefit (in addition to her children's and her own) she prays.

[27] Ibid., 157-158.

[28] *CIMRM 1*, no. 284. The term *mater* here could refer to a grade parallel to the known *pater* grade, the highest and most important within the cult. See below.

[29] *CIMRM 1*, no. 705. For the dispute, see *CIMRM 2*, no. 705. Vermaseren reads the dedication, "*D(eo) [i(nvicto)] M(ithrae) / Varia / Q(uinti) f(ilia) / Severa / v(otum) s(olvit) l(ibens) m(erito),*" which could also be read "*D(is) M(anibus)…,*" for which there are literally thousands of examples, or perhaps "*D(is) M(agnis)…,*" for which there are a few occurances, though the context of this particular dedication is

Mithras from a woman named Blastia, found in Pannonia at Emona.[30] Mussies uses all of these in support of his hypothesis that women were allowed to make dedications to the cult, perhaps through their male relatives, and thus Cascelia's inscription could indeed be addressed to Mithras (or some syncretistic version thereof). This particular line of argument is necessary only because Mussies begins with the assumption that women were not admitted.

Even though the vast majority of evidence involves, depicts, or was created by men, why assume that women were not allowed to participate in the mysteries? There is no ancient text which states that women were excluded from the mysteries of Mithras. In fact, several sources seem to suggest that some women had significant dealings with the cult, and perhaps were even initiated into the rites.

The first major proponent of the notion of women's exclusion was Franz Cumont himself, who through his vast erudition created a picture of Hellenistic Mithraism which persisted for over seventy years.[31] In his 1902 monograph on the mysteries, Cumont seems to possess evidence concerning women which we later scholars do not:

> ... Mithra forbade their participation in his mysteries and so deprived himself of the incalculable assistance of the propagandists. The rude discipline of the order did not permit them to take the degrees in the sacred cohorts, and, as among the Mazdeans of the Orient, they occupied only a secondary place in the society of the faithful. Among the hundreds of inscriptions that have come down to us, not one mentions either a priestess, a woman initiate, or even a donatress.[32]

Yet we possess evidence which Cumont did not, for above I have reviewed instances of at least one possible female initiate and a number of "donatresses." Moreover, one could argue for the possible existence

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probably Mithraic. See Mussies, 164, note 12. Regardless, this example of Mussies's is questionable evidence for our purposes.

[30] *CIMRM 2*, no. 1463 (Mussies's note 12 mistakenly reads *CIMRM II*, no. 1462, but the inscription to which he refers is actually no. 1463).

[31] See Beck (1984), 2002-2115.

[32] Cumont (1903), 173. Here Cumont was probably responding to F. Lajard, who had previously assumed the opposite view. See below, note 64.

of a priestess-like grade of *mater* within the cult, an initiatory level parallel to the well-attested *pater* grade. In a Cologne *mithraeum*, a *mater* is mentioned in the same inscription as a *pater*, which Vermaseren interprets as "certainly the father of a Mithras community which had relations with a cult for women with a *mater*," for although it was discovered inside a *mithraeum*, the inscription is addressed to a goddess.[33] Even more intriguing is the aforementioned inscription on a column from the Ostia *mithraeum* which reads, "*Virtutem / dendrop(horis) / ex ar(genti) p(ondo) II / Iunia Zosime / mater d(onum) d(edit)*."[34] While these two hints of a *mater* initiation grade are far from conclusive evidence, they certainly suggest the possibility of a name for females within the *pater* grade.

The next advocate for the notion of women's exclusion was J.M.C. Toynbee, in a 1956 article somewhat compromised by an inclination toward Christian apologetic. In this response to some unorthodox suggestions by G.F. Brandon and J. Ferguson, Toynbee points out the questionable nature of Porphyry's and Tertullian's passages, notes the masculine names of the seven Mithraic grades, and claims there is an "absence of any trace of women in Mithraic dedications."[35] In the same year, Vermaseren published the first volume of his compilation of Mithraic evidence, with the excavation reports from Santa Prisca following three years later, and volume two of the compilation in 1960.[36] But even with the most important evidence now available, scholars continue to uphold Cumont's view. L.A. Campbell, in his 1968 synthesis of the evidence, reads Porphyry's *De abstinentia* line as "lionesses,"

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[33] *CIMRM 2*, no. 1027.

[34] *CIMRM 1*, no. 284.

[35] Toynbee, 108-109, responding to two previous articles which had made passing reference to the possibility of a female grade of lioness. Supra note 10. Also, G.F. Brandon, "Mithraism and its Challenge to Christianity," *Hibbert Journal* 53 (1955), 107-114. The names of the seven grades of initiation are given by Jerome, *Epist.* 107.2 (*ad Laetam*).

[36] Supra notes 10 and 17.

yet he still assumes the "exclusion of women from membership."[37] In 1975, R. Turcan surveyed much of the textual evidence concerning Mithras, concluding that the participation of women in the mysteries is not directly confirmed by any ancient document.[38] Again, however, the *exclusion* of women is not confirmed either.

Most of the recent scholars' assumptions along these lines, Mussies' included, seem to rest on the work of Richard Gordon. In a 1980 article for the *Journal of Mithraic Studies*, later re-published in a collection of Gordon's work in 1996, he argues extensively that women provided the central justification for the Mithraic initiates' extreme separation from the everyday world.[39] In order to do this, Gordon refers to what he calls the "Graeco-Roman encyclopaedia," all the miscellaneous folk knowledge which he garners from such authors as Pliny and Aelian, elaborating what he sees as the popular, psychological associations with the entities for which the first four initiation grades were named. This somewhat arbitrary and indiscriminate source-use may be called into question, as it builds one object of free association upon another and provides no standard of judgement, aside from the idea that all of the Classical world from Hesiod to Aelian conceptualized nature, gender, and symbolism in the same manner. The whole method is thus based upon a few disputable assumptions which call into question any conclusions Gordon might draw from the enterprise.

He begins by noting that the names of Jerome's seven Mithraic initiatory grades inherently exclude females, much as Toynbee stated

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[37] Leroy A. Campbell, *Mithraic Iconography and Ideology* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1968), 18; 316.

[38] Robert Turcan, *Mithras Platonicus: Recherches sur l'Hellénisation philosophique de Mithra* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1975), 36. Though later, in his textbook on Roman cults, he fully echoes Cumont's view on women in the cult, as mentioned above. Supra note 4.

[39] Richard Gordon, "Reality, evocation and boundary in the Mysteries of Mithras," *Journal of Mithraic Studies* 3 (1980), 19-99; reprint in Richard Gordon, *Image and Value in the Graeco-Roman World: Studies in Mithraism and Religious Art* (Aldershot: VARIORUM, 1996), no. V. See especially pp. 42-64.

in 1956.[40] *Pater*, he says, is obviously masculine. He explains the exclusively male nature of *heliodromus* by the fact that all runners in the Classical world were men, despite such mythological exceptions as Atalanta. Similarly, *Perses* is a man's name. As for *leo*, Gordon argues that the ancients believed lions to be opposed to having (or unable to have) intercourse,[41] despite the fact that Aristotle, Pliny, and Aelian, all refer to lion offspring and/or mating.[42] He then mis-quotes Pliny (*Naturalis historia* 8.42), saying that Romans saw lionesses as lusting excessively after other species, when Pliny actually wrote such about *male* lions.[43] Combining these with a few other obscure references, he reasons that in the Classical conception, lions were "so hot" as to be impotent. Further, he connects this with the supposed Mithraic concept of "heat" being necessary for the release of souls (*apogenesis*) from *genesis*.[44] It remains unclear whether this metaphysical abstraction has more to do with Mithraism or with certain of his Neo-Platonic sources.

Gordon gives the grade *miles* only brief treatment, because "the military life so obviously excluded the female in the Graeco-Roman world."[45] The name was doubly symbolic for the purposes of the cult, he says, because soldiers in the Roman Empire could not have full civil marriages. But if one accepts that female exclusion and marital denial were the implied meanings of the name, was the same also true with the contemporary notion of the *militia Christi*? Female members of the Christian cult(s) were certainly included within this term, even though they could not be soldiers in the Roman army.[46] Religious

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[40] Ibid., 43-44. Supra note 10. Jerome, *Epist.* 107.2 (*ad Laetam*).

[41] Gordon, 46 (also see his note 60).

[42] Aristotle, *Historia animalium* 6.31; Pliny, *Naturalis historia* 8.19; 8.45; Aelian, *Natura animalium* 4.34.

[43] Pliny, *Naturalis historia* 8.42: "*Africa haec maxime spectat inopia aquarum ad paucos amnes congregantibus se feris. Ideo multiformes ibi anamalium partus varie feminis cuiusque generis mares aut vi aut voluptate miscente.*"

[44] Gordon, 47. See also Aelian, *Natura animalium* 4.34.

[45] Ibid.

[46] See *Romans* 14:10; 2 *Timothy* 2:1-13; Tertullian, *De Corona Militis* 15.3-4; *De praescriptione haereticorum* 20; Origen, *In Iudic. hom.* 9; *Contra Celsum* 8.73;

groups, even ancient ones, with militaristic or agonistic rhetoric do not necessarily exclude women, nor are they coincidentally "hostile to the female principle."

Gordon next examines the grade *nymphus*, a name which he sees as a Latin combination of the Greek words νυμφίος and νύμφη, forming a sort of "marital androgyny," not only untranslatable but also inconceivable outside the world of the mysteries.[47] In demonstrating the association of this grade with Venus, Gordon notes that the planet was known as the "bringer of light" and associated with both the evening and morning stars, an ambiguity (dark and light) reflected in the fact that the goddess herself was seen as embodying both male and female principles.[48] Gordon understands this as being hostile to women, so that "the female is not an independent principle, it is part of the male,"[49] rather than interpreting the idea as gender ambiguity or bisexuality, a title that could conceivably include males and females at once.

The lowest grade, *corax*, he singles out as particularly interesting because there is no separate feminine declension of the noun in either Greek or Latin, as, he says, Varro explicitly puzzled over in antiquity.[50] In actuality, Varro points out a great number of animal names which denote both genders of the species in order to illustrate the irregularities

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Cyprian, *Ep.* 76.6; et al. See especially Adolf von Harnack, *Militia Christi: Die christliche Religion und der Soldatenstand in den ersten drei Jahrhunderten* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1963 [reprint]), for a compilation of such references.

[47] Gordon, 48-49. He provides no indication of the problems with this grade name in Jerome's mss. See my discussion in note 10 above.

[48] Ibid., 51-53.

[49] Ibid., 53.

[50] Gordon cites Varro, *De lingua Latina* 5.14; 8.7; 8.46-47; 9.36-41, all of which either have nothing to do with gender or speak of it only generally with various examples. Varro only mentions *corax* at 9.55, in a laundry list of animal examples. At no point does he specifically puzzle over the raven or the fact that these words include both genders in one or the other. He is merely systematically explaining one of the ways in which Latin behaves unusually. Cf. Gordon, 44; 83, n. 54.

of Latin. Thus *corax*, while a divergence from strict language rules, is
neither exceptional nor extraordinarily interesting. Pliny, Gordon con-
tinues, wrote that commoners believed ravens to have intercourse and
to give birth through their beaks, citing Jean-Pierre Vernant's analy-
ses of Hesiod as evidence that people in the Classical world believed
the human mouth to be the opposite of the vagina.[51] Thus utilizing the
antithesis of a human female's organ, Gordon reasons, the raven is not
only a completely male animal, but also hostile to women. He next uses
Aelian to show that people in the Classical world believed the raven to
become drier and weaker in late summer, and then he employs Marcel
Detienne's analysis of the Athenian Adonis cult to illustrate the sup-
posed ancient notion that human males are drier and weaker during
the same period.[52] Further, Gordon states that in the Classical concep-
tion, ravens were associated with boundaries and also *crossed* them,
and he posits that this included gender boundaries and (symbolically)
human sex-distinctions. He provides, however, no tangible connection
to Mithraism. The haphazard and dubious nature of this source-use
aside, Gordon only demonstrates the questionable notion of this ani-
mal's sexual ambiguity in the minds of certain ancients. If in fact the
raven *were* a sexually ambiguous symbol, its possible iconographic

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[51] Ibid., 44-45. Gordon couples this with the supposed notion that the presence of
a raven complicates human birthing. Here he cites Pliny, *Naturalis historia* 10.32,
which contains no reference to mouths, vaginas, or birthing, but rather has to do
with migrating swans! He also utilizes Aelian, *Natura animalium* 3.43, which only
relates that elderly ravens feed themselves to their young, and again has nothing to
do with birthing or the vagina. For an example of this modern structuralist approach
of which Gordon seems to make use, see Jean-Pierre Vernant, "Le mythe prométhéen
chez Hésiode," in *Mythe et société en Grèce ancienne* (Paris, 1974), 157-175.

[52] Gordon, 45. Cf. Hesiod, *Works and Days* 414-419; 582-588; 704-705. See Marcel
Detienne, *Les jardins d'Adonis: la mythologie des aromates en Grèce* (Paris, 1972),
especially 222-225; Gordon asserts all this despite the fact that Detienne's book
was not well-received by other Classicists. For a skeptical treatment of the English
translation, see G.S. Kirk's review in the *Times Literary Supplement* (18 August 1977),
922-923.

use in Mithraism might just well *support* the idea that women were involved.

Thus, according to Gordon's analysis, all the grades consciously exclude or suppress the feminine.[53] Granted, all the grade names listed by Jerome are masculine in form, but by no means does it follow that women were excluded from the *cursus*, or that there were no corresponding titles for females within it, such as *lea* or *mater*.

Regardless, Gordon proceeds to consult the "encyclopaedia" for ancient perceptions of hyenas, determining that the hyena is an animal which repeatedly changes its sex, and demonstrating this animal's connection with the concept of reversal of norms.[54] Yet even if one grants the hyenas reading of Porphyry, an animal which changes its sex would seem a likely candidate for symbolizing women participants in a primarily masculine cult. Even if women were symbolized as hyenas, animals which never occur in Mithraic iconography (as opposed to all the other animals mentioned in Porphyry's passage, including lionesses, which do), does this necessarily mean that the women were excluded from participation? The evidence seems to suggest otherwise, especially given the possible references to participants dubbed *lea* and *mater*, which parallel the grades *leo* and *pater*, the two most important and most frequently documented grades of initiation.[55]

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[53] Ibid., 44.

[54] Gordon, 58-61. Perhaps due to the fact that the issue has been treated by others, Gordon does not provide his reasoning for dismissing the lionesses reading of Porphyry's text. On the widespread Classical conception of the hyena and its change of sex, see Aristotle, *Historia animalium* 6.32; Ovid, *Metamorphoses* 15.408-410; Pliny, *Naturalis historia* 8.44; Tertullian, *De pallio* 3; Aelian, *Natura animalium* 1.25. Gordon also cites Pliny, *Naturalis historia* 8.105, but there is no 8.105 in that particular work.

[55] See my discusssion of the Oea epitaphs and the Junia Zosime inscription above. In view of these, and the lioness iconography in various Mithraic contexts (and lack thereof for hyenas), the text of Porphyry was likely corrupted at some point so that an hyena intruded (ΛΕΑΙ- = ΥΑΙ-). On the likelihood of such corruption of poorly written/ poorly read texts (Latin in this case), see Louis Havet, *Manuel de critique verbale* (Paris: Librarie Hachette, 1911), 434 ff. See also my translation of the passage in question at the beginning of this article.

Gordon does finally come to the notorious Porphyry passage, quoted above, which he reads as "hyenas" and sees as confirming his theory:

> Nowhere does Pallas [Porphyry's source] say that women were initiates into the Mysteries: indeed, he explicitly states that they were not, by opposing his first category τοὺς μὺν μετέχοντας... μύστας ('the initiates who are full members') from his second τὰς δὲ γυναῖκας, and from his third, τοὺς δὲ ὑπηρετοῦντας ('the underlings'). If he had wanted to talk about what we might want him to talk about..., he would have put his point differently.[56]

Gordon's argument here is that Porphyry (or, rather, Pallas) is interested in the Mithraists' use of animal terms for human beings, not in the identity or gender of the persons involved in the mysteries, so that the order of his terms does not matter. The three groups, namely the full members, the women, and the underlings, are clearly distinguished from one another.[57]

Gordon is quite convincing and probably correct concerning the importance of context and the fact that the order is insignificant. What *is* significant, though, is that all of the animals Porphyry identifies in his whole digression on Mithraism are the names and symbols of various grades for initiates in the rites. The ὑπηρετοῦντες are subservient *participants*. Based on the names of the Mithraic grades gleaned from other sources (most notably Jerome's letter),[58] the κάρακες (ὑπηρετοῦντες) represent the lowest grade of initiation, while the λέοντες (μετέχοντες) are the fourth grade. The masculine participle μετέχοντες (and even the noun μύσται) could conceivably include the γυναῖκες, indicating that the initiates receive different names according to gender. Porphyry subsequently mentions other participants, most notably providing the πάτρες symbols, thus adding the highest grade of initiation to the list. The groups are distinguished from one another, yes, but they all belong within the context of the mysteries. If women are interpreted as somehow included in the rites, Porphyry's list forms a cohesive whole. If they are interpreted as excluded, they stick out

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[56] Gordon, 57-58.

[57] Ibid., 58.

[58] Supra note 10.

like a sore thumb: Porphyry does not even *mention* any other type of non-participants, much less indicate their animal symbols.[59]

Gordon next treats the myth that Mithras was "born from a rock," concluding that since Mithras thus had no mother, but only a sexless *petra genetrix*, this myth (whatever it was, for we have no literary accounts, only iconography) further perpetuated the "systematic denial of the female."[60] In the iconography, Mithras emerges or springs from the egg-like rock fully grown, often carrying implements, and sometimes clad.[61] Eggs pictured by themselves do not deny the existence of hens, and the Mithras scene is quite different from Athena's birth or Dionysus' gestation. Moreover, the depictions may not represent the deity's birth at all, but somehow his power over the cosmos.[62] Gordon closes this section of his article by concluding that the cult of Mithras was "an extreme attempt to found the age-old dream of patriarchal societies, to do away with women and leave the world pure and unsullied."[63] This is an unreasonable view, constructed via tenuous methods, and it seems to be refuted by the evidence.

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[59] See Porphyry, *De abstinentia* 4.16. Supra pp. 3-4, notes 7-10, especially regarding the lioness iconography and lack thereof for hyenas.

[60] Gordon, 54-57. He bases much of his analysis here on the spurious myth of a local hero of Armenia, Diorphos, for which he cites (p. 55 and note 89) the pseudo-Plutarch, *De fluviis* 23.4 (Karl Müller, ed., *Geographi Graeci Minores*, vol. II, 663), as his only authority. This brief passage states that Diorphos was generated from a rock onto which Mithras had ejaculated, and that this son of Mithras later dueled with Ares and subsequently was transformed into a mountain. The earliest mention that Mithras himself was "born from a rock," however vague, comes from Justin Martyr, *Dial.* 70. The actual myth behind the numerous representations of the fully-grown Mithras emerging from an egg-like rock is not known.

[61] *CIMRM 1*, nos. 390, 590, 650, 860, 985; *CIMRM 2*, nos. 1088, 1240, 1283, 1292, 1301, 1593, 1727, 2334, etc. See Alan Schofield, "The Search for Iconographic Variation in Roman Mithraism," *Religion* 25 (1995), 51-66.

[62] Schofield, 51-66. See also Roger Beck, *Planetary Gods and Planetary Orders in the Mysteries of Mithras* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1988), 35; Howard M. Jackson, "The Meaning and Function of the Leontocephaline in Roman Mithraism," *Numen* 32 (1985), 17-45.

[63] Gordon, 63.

Perhaps we should look to other scholars for clues of women's relationship to the Mithraic mysteries. F. Lajard, Cumont's predecessor and rival in Mithraic studies, explicitly assumed the notion of women participants, and Cumont reacted strongly against this.[64] In 1955, J. Ferguson suggested the possibility of a Lioness grade, to which Toynbee promptly responded with a reprimand.[65] As mentioned above, Turcan wrote that nothing is proven by the ancient authors, but later recanted and echoed the more traditional view.[66] Also Vermaseren (who may be considered Cumont's successor as the leading Mithraic scholar), in his popular account, concluded that women were present in a certain sect, but that this group was not really important or necessarily indicative of Mithraism as a whole.[67]

On the basis of the evidence reviewed above, a conclusion similar to that of Vermaseren seems most plausible, but it must be taken further. Women were able to be involved in Mithraism as it was practiced in at least some portion of the empire; they were not, as far as we can tell, actively or explicitly excluded from the Mithraic mysteries on any theological or ideological basis. We have candid textual support for female involvement (whether as true initiates or as marginal participants is unclear) from both Porphyry and Tertullian. There exist Mithraic inscriptions possibly naming female grades of *mater* and *lea* from Oea, Cologne, and Ostia, and iconographical representations of both women and lionesses from Rome, Oea, Angleur, Dieburg, Scarabantia, and Carrawburgh. What is more, dedications bearing female-authored inscriptions have been found at Rome, Ostia, Milan, and Emona. Finally, no ancient sources state that women were not allowed into the cult of Mithras. Therefore Mithraic scholars cannot state with any certainty that the cult was exclusively male. Indeed,

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[64] Cumont (1903), 173. For example, see Lajard, *Introduction à l'étude du culte public des mystères de Mithra en Orient et en Occident* (Paris, 1847); *Recherches sur le culte public et les mystères de Mithra en Orient et en Occident* (Paris, 1867).

[65] Supra note 10.

[66] Turcan (1975), 36; Turcan (1996), 240.

[67] Supra note 15.

women seem likely to have been involved in at least some instances, in at least some locations of the empire. It was possible for women to participate in the cult of Mithras, even if this did not occur with any frequency.[68]

Still, proponents of the received view might object, as the representations of women in Mithraism constitute only a very small proportion of the total corpus of evidence. Even if this is only an argument from silence, in this case the silence certainly needs to be given due consideration, for it follows that women were not involved with Mithraism on any large scale. I argue that women were not excluded from the rites explicitly, but rather did not often have occasion to engage in them. As has been demonstrated by a number of scholars, the Mithraic mysteries seem to have appealed to certain types of individuals within the Roman world, namely soldiers and bureaucratic slaves.[69] Seeing as women usually did not belong to these groups, it is not surprising that women in general did not choose (or were not chosen) to join the cult, but rather preferred or had greater opportunity to join other popular mystery religions, such as those of Isis or Cybele.[70] Perhaps a more important factor may have been that since the Mithraic cult was com-

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[68] As for the initiation grade titles, those for which there are natural female equivalents in Latin, such as *leo* and *pater*, have been documented. Those for which there are no female equivalents, such as *miles*, *nymphus*, and *corax*, have been shown to be either inclusive to females or sexually ambiguous.

[69] For example, see Michael P. Speidel, *Mithras-Orion: Greek Hero and Roman Army God* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1980), 38-45; Burkert, 42-43.

[70] See Sharon Kelly Heyob, *The Cult of Isis Among Women in the Graeco-Roman World* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1975), 81-110; Panayotis Pachis, "The cult of Mithras in Thessalonica," in J.R. Hinnells, ed., *Studies in Mithraism* (Rome: "L'Erma" di Bretschneider, 1994), 237 f.; Burkert, 37-53; 105. While I agree that these other cults facilitated participation of women more readily than Mithraism, by no means were they primarily feminine or female-oriented cults, as Heyob and others may imply. Indeed, many of these types of Hellenistic mystery religions in the Roman world were certainly not organized or systematized according to gender, but perhaps had more to do with class boundaries. For example, see A. Degrassi, ed., *Inscriptiones Latinae Liberae Rei Publicae* (Firenze: La Nuova Italia Editrice, 1963), no. 159 (= *CIL* I^2, no. 1263).

posed of supposedly secret, autonomous "brotherhoods," women were not often asked by the male-oriented members to join the groups. By no means does this require that they were universally excluded on some special ideological basis, at least not one differing from the common opinions of the time.

It seems then, that we should rethink this *idée reçû* that "women were not admitted to the mysteries of the Persian god,"[71] that the "small autonomous groups of initiates" were "exclusively male."[72] For even though the vast majority of evidence concerns men, the conclusion does not follow that women were not allowed. Of course, to assume that all Mithraic groups across the empire held the same views would be grossly inaccurate. Some sects were no doubt more inclined to have women involved, perhaps in those areas without alternative mystery cult groups. Some cells may indeed have excluded women, and doubtless many more were, by intention or not, exclusively male. Yet the combined testimony of the Oea epitaph and iconography, the Porphyry reference to lionesses, and Tertullian's *virgines* passage strongly suggest at least a northern African instance of females within Mithraic cult activity. Perhaps Mithraism developed into different branches, with different practices over time, so that possibly additional grades were added. The evidence may indicate at least two or more strains of Mithraism, a notion which might help to explain the presence of so many separate *mithraea* in locations such as Ostia, where fewer should have sufficed. Like many mystery cults of the period, the functional structure of the cult groups probably became increasingly complex in organization,[73] perhaps leading to the addition or exclusion of women at certain points. A useful comparison might be the mysteries

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[71] Mussies, 157.

[72] Beck, s. v. "Mithras" (*OCD*, 1996).

[73] As John North has demonstrated with relation to the Roman Bacchus cult. See his "Religious toleration in Republican Rome," *Proceedings of the Cambridge Philological Society* 25 (1979), 85-103.

of Dionysus/Bacchus, which seem to have initially excluded males (as per Euripides's *Bacchae*) but later included both genders.[74]

The evidence reviewed above is not conclusive, and the status of women within the mysteries of Mithras, like so many aspects of this enigmatic religion, is perhaps indeterminable. Women were involved with the cult in some areas, but whether they were actually initiated is uncertain. Regardless, to state that women were excluded from the rites is to dismiss a substantial amount of evidence, and to repeat a time-honored scholarly misinterpretation.

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[74] Livy (39.13.8-9) lists among the innovative reforms of the priestess Paculla Annia the inclusion of males in the heretofore all-female rites. While this attribution to Paculla is certainly legendary, it illustrates that males were included by at least 186 BCE, whether or not this had been occurring before Paculla's time. See E.S. Gruen, "The Bacchanalian Affair," in *Studies in Greek Culture and Roman Policy* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1990), 34-78, especially 52 ff.

THE IDENTITY OF A MYSTIC: THE CASE OF SA'ID SARMAD, A JEWISH-YOGI-SUFI COURTIER OF THE MUGHALS

Nathan Katz

Summary

Sa'id Sarmad's *dargah* (saint's tomb) dominates the entryway to Delhi's imposing Jama Masjid. But Sarmad was a Jew, both by birth and affirmation. He was also, according to his *Rubaiyat*, "a follower of the Furqan (i.e., a Sufi), a (Catholic) priest, a (Buddhist) monk, a Jewish rabbi, an infidel, and a Muslim." Indeed, it is hard to imagine a mystic with a more complex confessional identity.

This paper explores both Sarmad's apparently contradictory religious self-identification and the complex religious context which Sarmad found in seventeenth-century North India. It will trace Sarmad's spiritual path as it meandered between Judaism, Islam and Hinduism, as recorded in his poetry and in the hagiographical (*taskira*) traditions which surround him, and will contribute to the discussion of the relationship between the mystic and his or her religion of birth or adoption.

Said to be the second largest mosque in the world, Delhi's Jama Masjid is the bastion of Islam in North India. There prayers are offered, *fatwas* issued, pilgrimages made, vows fulfilled and mystics venerated. Between 1638 and 1650, Mughal Emperor Shah Jehan built both the masjid and his royal complex, known today as the Red Fort, separated by a mile-long, broad avenue which was the Empire's prime marketplace.

As one enters the masjid through the *shahi darwaza* (royal entrance), at the honored right portal is a *dargah*, a Muslim saint's tomb, dedicated to Sa'id Sarmad (1590?-1660?), one of the mystical luminaries of the Mughal Court. All of the appurtenances associated with a Muslim saint's cult are to be found there — pilgrimage manuals, *taskaras* or hagiographies, collections of his mystical quatrains, as well as a festival (*urs*) held annually on his death anniversary (the 18th day of Rabi).

Sarmad as Muslim, Jew, Atheist and Mystic

Possession may be nine-tenths of the law, but Sarmad's religious identity is not quite so easily established. According to his first biography, written by the Iranian Tahir Nasrabadi sometime between 1672 and 1678, Sarmad was "a Jew who later converted to Islam."[1] According to Mu'bid Shah's (or Mohsan Fani's) *Dabistan-i-Mazahib*,[2] Sarmad "... was originally from a family of learned Yahuds [Jews], of a class they call Rabbanian..."; after an investigation into the faith of the Rabbins and the perusal of the Mosaic books, he became a Muselman."[3] Shah was Sarmad's friend in Hyderabad. Sarmad and Abhai Chand were his informants about Judaism in his excursus into comparative religions, the *Dabistan*. The chapter on "The Yahuds" contains Sarmad's eccentric presentation of Judaic beliefs and Abhai Chand's Persian translation of Gen. 1-6:8, bearing the title, "The Book of Adam." Most scholars, such as B.A. Hashimi,[4] unquestioningly cite this verse as evidence of Sarmad's Muslim identity. Lakhpat Raj goes further to assert that "It is obvious that his conversion to Islam was out

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[1] *Taskara-i-Tahir Nasrabadi*, a text discussed by Maulavi 'Abdu'l Wali, "A Sketch of the Life of Sarmad," *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal* 20 (1924), p. 121, n. 3. Nasrabadi's work is the basis for the *taskaras* which are sold for a few rupees at Sarmad's *dargah* (see the Urdu *taskara*, p. 18). The contemporary *taskara* published by Pir Syed Muhammad Sarmadi is available in Urdu (*Hazrat Sarmad Shaheed*, Delhi, Kutub-Khanna-e-Sarmadi, no date) and Hindi (*Hazrat Sarmad Shaheed Rooh*, translated into Hindi by Ahmed Jalees, Delhi, Kutub-Khanna-e-Sarmadi, no date). The quote in the text is from page 17 of the Hindi *taskara*.

[2] First published in 1660, the *Dabistan* was translated by David Shea and Anthony Troyer, *The Dabistan or School of Manners*, 3 vols., Paris, Oriental Translation Fund, 1843.

[3] David Shea and Anthony Troyer, *The Dabistan, or School of Manners*, Washington, M. Walter Dunne Publisher, 1901, p. 299.

[4] B.A. Hashimi, "Sarmad, His Life and Quatrains," *Islamic Culture* (1933): 663-672, p. 666.

of earnest convictions...," but offers no evidence for his knowledge of Sarmad's motives.[5]

But is that only one version of the religious identity of Sarmad, the "official" version of the saint's cult?

According to Maulvani 'Abdu'l Wali, Walter J. Fischel, and others,[6] Sarmad remained a Jew despite his spiritual peregrinations around India. Wali reconstructs Sarmad's beliefs as contained in the Judaism chapters of the *Dabistan*. His beliefs include a rejection of the messiahship of Jesus, a Kabbalistic theology based on emanations of light, the transmigration of souls and a complex theory of divine rewards and punishments, and concludes that "He had neither any faith in Christianity or in Islam. Once a Jew he remained ever a Jew."[7]

Fischel, a pioneering scholar of Jews in Asia, approvingly cites Wali's conclusion, explaining: "A merchant by profession and, it seems, a very prosperous one, his search for knowledge and wisdom brought him into contact with the leading Mohammedan scholars of his time, under whose guidance he studied Islamic philosophy, metaphysics and science, and under whose influence he was apparently induced to become a Muslim. His conversion was probably only nominal and superficial, since he himself later warned the Jews not to convert themselves to Mohammed's religion."[8]

Others, including some of Sarmad's contemporaries, insisted that he was neither Muslim nor Jew, but a conniving atheist, much as they alleged about his student, the Mughal crown prince Dara Shikoh. One such skeptic was Dr. Niccolo Manucci of Venice, court physician to Dara's rival, Aurangzeb. Manucci wrote that "Dara had no religion. When with Mohamedans he praised the tenets of Muhammad; when

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[5] Lakhpat Rai, *Sarmad, His Life and Rubais*, Gorakhpur, Hanumanprasad Poddar Smarak Samita, 1978, p. 20.

[6] For example, M.J. Seth, *Armenians in India*, Calcutta, Sri Ganga Press, 1937, p. 171, who held that Sarmad was an Armenian Jew whose family had settled in Persia.

[7] Wali, "A Sketch of the Life of Sarmad," pp. 120-121.

[8] Walter J. Fischel, "Jews and Judaism at the Court of the Moghul Emperors in Medieval India," *Islamic Culture* 25 (1951), p. 120.

with Jews, the Jewish religion; in the same way, when with Hindus, he praised Hinduism. This is why Aurangzeb styled him Kafir [infidel]. At the same time, he had great delight in talking to the Jesuit fathers on religion, and making them dispute with his learned Mohamedans, or with a Hebrew called Cermad [Sarmad], an atheist much like the prince."[9]

Two recent Indian books about Sarmad offer a fourth possibility, that he was a Mystic or Sufi and that Mystics and Sufis are often misunderstood as belonging to one or another religion, or as an atheist. One contemporary author who holds this view is Isaac A. Ezekiel, an Indian Jew and a Radhasoami Satsangi (a *satsangi* is a member of the Radha Soami Satsang). In his foreword to Ezekiel's book, fellow Satsangi Joseph Leeming comments: "Sarmad was a unique member of the spiritual galaxy composed of the scores of great saints of India of the past and of the present day. This is because he was born of Jewish parents and was brought up as an adherent of the Jewish religion. During his visits to India, however, he found that a greater spiritual truth was known to the illumined souls of that country, and from one or more of them he discovered and absorbed the real and basic truths of the purpose of human life, of genuine spirituality, and of the Path to God-realization."[10] If Sarmad was no Jew, according to Leeming, he was no Muslim either. "Sarmad is known to most present-day Indians as a Muslim Saint, or Master of the highest order. This seems to be partly due to the fact that in giving out his spiritual teachings he quoted

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[9] Niccolo Manucci, *Storia Do Mogor*, trans. by William Irvine (1907, p. 223), quoted by Wali, "A Sketch of the Life of Sarmad," p. 120. According to Sheikh Mohamed Ikram, many Europeans, especially Jesuits, were partisan toward the strict Sunni rulers in India, and had little patience with the more tolerant Sufis or Shi'as. "The Jesuits were critical of this [i.e., Akbar's] policy of tolerance, declaring the destruction of Hindu temples by Muslims 'a praiseworthy action,' but noting their 'carelessness' in allowing public performance of Hindu sacrifices and religious practices." Sheikh Mohamed Ikram, *Muslim Civilization in India*, ed. Ainslie T. Embree, New York, Columbia University Press, 1964, p. 235.

[10] Joseph Leeming, "Foreword" to I.A. Ezekiel, *Sarmad (Jewish Saint of India)*, Beas, Punjab, Radha Soami Satsang, 1966, p. vii.

the sayings of many Muslim Saints. It is possible that he nominally accepted Islam; but he did not teach its orthodox beliefs. Instead, he taught the practice given out by all Perfect Masters, of listening to the Divine Melody of the Word and Power of God, the Holy Spirit."[11] Ezekiel succinctly made the same point: "In mysticism, the religious affiliations of saints are of no importance..."[12]

While our Satsangi writers seem to want to make all mystics their own, M.G. Gupta is content to declare Sarmad a Mystic or Sufi and leave it at that. When he does so he employs the term "Sufi" in much the way that contemporary western Sufis do, as utterly separable from Islam in particular and from religion in general. Gupta wrote, "Sarmad was a mystic saint of the highest order and had rejected the traditional faiths — Judaism, Islam, Christianity, Hinduism and Buddhism and had no use for idol-worship, rituals, canonical laws, scriptures, mosques and temples."[13]

Such diverse attributions of faith — Muslim, Jewish, Atheist, Mystical — reflect more than jealous claims upon the mystic. An understanding of Sarmad's life (as found in his Muslim hagiography and in his poems) and of the religious environment of his day — both the fecund *bhakti*-crucible of medieval North India and the religious policies of Mughal emperors — shed light on the thorny question of the relation of the mystic to a religious tradition, and in a larger sense on the relationship between mysticism and religion, or between the esoteric and the exoteric.

The Problem of a Mystic's Identity

Just who a mystic is depends on what one understands mysticism to be. Thus, the complex issues surrounding Sarmad's religious identity rest upon a prior understanding of mysticism itself. The essential question is whether there is one mysticism or many, whether there is

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[11] Leeming, "Foreword" to Ezekiel, *Sarmad (Jewish Saint of India)*, p. vii.

[12] Ezekiel, *Sarmad (Jewish Saint of India)*, p. v.

[13] M.G. Gupta, *Sarmad the Saint (Life and Works)*, Agra, M.G. Publishers, 1991, p. v.

one mystical experience which is subsequently interpreted through the categories of thought and language of specific religious traditions, or whether these caregories preceed and therefore condition all experience, mystical and otherwise.

During an earlier period in the history of *Religionswissenschaft*, these positions were cogently articulated by Aldous Huxley[14] and R.C. Zaehner.[15] Huxley held that that there is one metaphysical/experiential essence which is subsequently interpreted according to the doctrines of the world's various religions. His point was put most forcefully by Agehananda Bharati, who wrote that all religions are reducable to a "numerical oneness" and that while the nondualist strands of Hinduism best reflect this metaphysical fact, it is nonetheless the basis for all mysticism, monistic, theistic, or otherwise.[16] Zaehner contended against Huxley's perennial philosophy, holding mysticism to be of at least two types: the higher theism and the lower monism. More recently, this debate was reenacted in the academic repartee between Steven T. Katz[17] and Huston Smith.[18] Katz argues that there are as many mysticisms as there are religious traditions (or perhaps he would hold there are as many mysticisms as there are mystics) because each tradition conditions the experiences of its adherents. Since there is no unmediated experience, he argues, there could be no one, extra-linguistic ("ineffable") experience which becomes intelligible subsequently through the language of the mystic's tradition. Smith

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[14] Aldous Huxley, *The Perennial Philosophy*, Cleveland and New York, Meridian Books/ World Publishing Co., 1968 [1944].

[15] R.C. Zaehner, *Hindu and Muslim Mysticism*, London, University of London/ Athlone Press, 1960.

[16] Agehananda Bharati, *The Light at the Center: Context and Pretext of Modern Mysticism*, Santa Barbara, CA, Ross-Erikson, 1972.

[17] Steven T. Katz, "Language, Epistemology and Mysticism," pp. 22-74 in Katz, ed., *Mysticism and Philosophical Analysis*, New York, Oxford University Press, 1978; and his rejoinder to Huston Smith's critique, "On Mysticism," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 56, no. 4 (1988): 751-757.

[18] Huston Smith, "Is There a Perennial Philosophy?" *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 55, no. 3 (1987): 553-566.

counters that the mystics of all traditions, at least the "introspective" sort of mystics, concur about the ineffable core of their experience, an agreement which he takes at face value as evidence for an ineffable reality underlying such experiences.

And somewhere in the midst of this debate we encounter Sarmad, who wandered from synagogue to masjid to ashram, claimed by each group as one of their own, and claimed by modern followers of certain mystical traditions to have transcended all such categorization.

His Life

Sarmad is best known in India for going about naked and because he was beheaded by Aurangzeb. Of course, there is much more to his life than this, and one may simply recapitulate the highlights of his *taskara* to begin to appreciate his many accomplishments.

(1) Sarmad was born in Armenia around 1590. A Jew, he read both the Taurat (Torah) and the Injil (Gospel) before studying Islam, to which he converted. He was an outstanding Persian poet and a successful merchant.[19]

(2) In 1031 A.H. he arrived at Thatta (near modern Karachi), an important port during Mughal times. He was so impressed with religious discussions in India that he decided to stay.[20]

(3) At a poetry conference, he heard a young Hindu boy, Abhai Chand, reciting *ghazals*. Sarmad immediately fell in love with the youth. The two began cohabiting, but Abhai Chand's family objected and separated the lovers. Sarmad became despondent and eventually was reunited with Abhai Chand, with the boy's family's blessings.[21]

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[19] Urdu *taskara*, p. 20.

[20] Urdu *taskara*, p. 21.

[21] Virtually every biographer has insisted that the love between Sarmad and Abhai Chand was "pure." The earliest written account of their relationship is found in the 1660 work, the *Dabistan*: "When he arrived at the town of *Tatta*, he fell in love with a Hindu boy, called Abhi Chand, and abandoning all other things, like a Sanyasi [Hindu renunciate], naked as he came from his mother, he sat down before the door of his beloved. The father of the object of his love, after having found by investigation the purity of the attachment manifested for his son, admitted Sarmad into his house, and

Abhai Chand became Sarmad's student, studying Jewish religion and the Hebrew and Persian languages well enough to translate sections of the Hebrew Bible into Persian, which were included in Mu'bid Shah's *Dabistan*.[22]

(4) At some point and for reasons not entirely clear, Sarmad renounced all clothing.[23] He let his hair and nails grow, according to a description by Mu'tamad Khan: "I found him naked, covered with thick crisped hair all over the body and long nails on his fingers."[24]

(5) Sarmad and Abhai Chand moved to Lahore, where they remained until 1044 A.H., when they moved to Hyderabad. In the Deccan, Sarmad flourished. He attracted many followers in high positions, he and Abhai Chand collaborated with Mu'bid Shah on the *Dabistan*, and Sarmad's fame as a poet and a mystic grew.[25]

(6) He then moved from Hyderabad to Delhi, stopping briefly at Agra. His fame preceded him, and in proximity of the Mughal court, Sarmad was befriended by Sufi *shaikh* Khwaja Syed Abdul Qasim Shabzwari.

(7) Mughal crown prince Dara Shikoh, long interested in mysticism, asked his father, Emperor Shah Jehan, to investigate Sarmad's spiritual eminence. The Emperor appointed *qazi* Inayat Ullah Khan to lead the inquiry, but Sarmad somehow was inaccessible to the judge, and accosted the Emperor at his court. The Emperor praised Sarmad's sanctity, but questioned him about his nudity. Sarmad is said to have replied with a quatrain: "Why do you object to my nudity at the same time as you acknowledge my miracles? The truth is not what is visible, but the truth is what is concealed in my heart, and that is love." Sarmad

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the young man too met him with an equal affection..." (Shea and Troyer, trans., *The Dabistan*, 1901, p. 299.) However, nowhere in Sarmad's poetry is there any indication that his love for Abhai Chand was other than carnal.

[22] Urdu *taskara*, pp. 21-23.

[23] Urdu *taskara*, p. 23.

[24] Introduction to *Rubaiyat-i-Sarmad*, Lahore, Marghoob Agency, 1920, pp. iv-v, quoted by Rai, *Sarmad, His Life and Rubais*, p. 25.

[25] Urdu *taskara*, pp. 23-25.

remained naked and so impressed the crown prince that he became his disciple.[26]

(8) With the encouragement of his *guru*, Dara transformed the Mughal court into an arena for interreligious debate, much as had done his grandfather, Emperor Akbar (1542-1605).[27] The *taskara* describes the unlikely scene: "There used to be Muslim scholars as well as Hindu yogis present in his [Dara's] court and he used to rank them all alike. In fact, he adopted religious practices that were a mixture of Muslim and Hindu beliefs... These practices were such that Aurangzeb, a staunch Muslim, hated him. As Aurangzeb was against Dara Shikoh, automatically Hazrat Sarmad came under suspicion."[28]

(9) As Shah Jehan became infirm, his empire became divided among his four sons: Shuja and Murad Baksh ruled in Bengal, Aurangzeb the Deccan, while Dara remained in Delhi with his ailing father, preparing to occupy the Peacock Throne. As battles raged, Dara and his allies, in alliances forged by Sarmad with the Shivaliks in Maharashtra,[29] the Sikhs in Punjab and an array of Shi'a and Sufi Muslims, waged war against Aurangzeb and his Sunni allies. Aurangzeb prevailed, imprisoned and finally executed his elder brother in 1659.[30]

(10) Dara's defeat led to a purge of his supporters, and Aurangzeb's chief justice, Mullah Abdul Qazi was appointed to investigate Sar-

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[26] Urdu *taskara*, pp. 25-27.

[27] See "Akbar the Great," *Encyclopedia Judaica*, Jerusalem, Koren, 1971, s.v.

[28] Urdu *taskara*, p. 27. It is important to note that the *taskara* opposed Aurangzeb to his brother Dara, and not to Sarmad. It is one of the ideological underpinnings of the *taskara* that both Aurangzeb and Sarmad were "right," as expressed in the Preface (pp. 7-8): "Hazrat Sarmad was a victim of injustice, but on the other hand Aurangzeb was not a culprit... Aurangzeb was not an enemy of Hazrat Sarmad, but as Emperor he had a moral obligation to defend the religion, Islam."

[29] Very recent excavations in Thane, near Mumbai, have unearthed an old Jewish cemetery, some of the graves are of Jews (Bene Israel) who held high ranks in Shivaji's army. See Pinhas David Bhalkar's report in *Kol India* (June 1998): 25.

[30] Urdu *taskara*, pp. 29-34.

mad.[31] Charges against Sarmad were filed, although it is not clear just what the charges were and for which ones he was convicted.

Some of the charges had to do with morality. His nakedness was a scandal of sorts. He was said to use *bhang* (marijuana), which had been outlawed by Aurangzeb just after his coronation,[32] and Sarmad's homosexual affair with Abhai Chand also bothered some[33] — although these three behaviors would have been unexceptional at the time. He was even accused of drinking Dr. Manucci's wine.[34]

Two of the charges in particular had to do with religious heresy. He is said to have denied the ascension of the Prophet (*al-Miraj*). And there is the famous incident when he was called into court by Mullah Abdul Qazi who demanded that he demonstrate his Muslim *bona fides* by reciting the *Kalima*, the Muslim affirmation of faith: "There is no God but God." Sarmad is said to have recited "There is no God" and then fell silent. In response to the *qazi*'s demand that he complete the credo's recitation, Sarmad reportedly said that he was still immersed in the negative and had yet to achieve the positive, reflecting the Sufi teaching of *fana* and *baaqa*, the annihilation of the individual and subsistence in the Eternal.[35] Then again, there was the heresy that Sarmad proclaimed faith in Hindu gods (see his quatrain 320 below), and as Lakhpat Rai reasoned, "Aurangzeb, a religious bigot, could have tolerated a naked Jew or even a naked Muslim who was supposed to be acting in contravention of Islamic law, but he could never tolerate a Muslim having faith in a Hindu God." [36] For one or another of these heresies, Sarmad may have been sentenced to death.

Other charges were purely political. One, of course, was his championing the cause of the defeated Dara against his usurper-brother. He was not popular among the mullahs of the day, with Mullah Abdul Qazi

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[31] Urdu *taskara*, pp. 33-36.

[32] Ikram, *Muslim Civilization in India*, p. 189.

[33] Gupta, *Sarmad the Saint (Life and Works)*, p. 45.

[34] Gupta, *Sarmad the Saint (Life and Works)*, p. 44.

[35] Urdu *taskara*, p. 42.

[36] Rai, *Sarmad, His Life and Rubais*, p. 53.

in particular. Rai argues that it was the mullahs, not Aurangzeb, who were Sarmad's antagonists. Jealous of his popularity, they connived to turn Aurangzeb against Sarmad.[37]

Sarmad also had failed to pay proper respects to Aurangzeb on several occasions.[38] There is the famous encounter between Aurangzeb and Sarmad on the roadway between the palace and the Jama Masjid. Aurangzeb reportedly asked the seated Sarmad to cover himself with a blanket, and Sarmad told the Emperor that he should put the blanket over his lap. As Aurangzeb lifted the blanket, he saw "freshly chopped heads, including the heads of his three innocent nephews and their companions." Terrified by this vision, Aurangzeb dropped the blanket, and Sarmad asked, "Tell me, shall I hide your crimes or my body?"[39]

The incident is the subject of one of Sarmad's quatrains:

> He who gave thee an earthly throne,
> Gave poverty to me;
> The costume covers ugliness;
> The faultless are granted the gift of nakedness.[40]

(11) Sarmad was beheaded for blasphemy in 1070 A.H. Legends recount how his head rolled from the palace to the masjid, reciting mystical quatrains all the route. His popular *taskara* appends a legend which aims to affirm Sarmad's saintliness while at the same time exonerating Aurangzeb: "When his head was chopped, he became so angry that he jumped, picked up his head and climbed the stairs of the masjid. Suddenly the loud voice of his *shaikh*, Syed Hare Bhare Shah, was heard. 'Sarmad, where are you going?' 'I am taking my case to the court of the Prophet Muhammad,' he replied. The voice again spoke: 'Calm down. You have reached your destination. For the whole of your life, you never complained. Why this anger now? This was your fate; otherwise, Aurangzeb was fully aware of your power

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[37] Rai, *Sarmad, His Life and Rubais*, pp. 49-50.

[38] Gupta, *Sarmad the Saint (Life and Works)*, p. 45.

[39] Urdu *taskara*, pp. 39-40.

[40] *Rubiy'at* 105, in Ezekiel, *Sarmad (Jewish Saint of India)*, p. 321.

and greatness.' After that Sarmad became silent and collapsed."[41] The *taskara* concludes: "It was the decision of God to raise Sarmad's status. It was decided to crown him with the jewel of martyrdom, and he proved deserving at every step. As a matter of fact, he knew about his fate from the very beginning."[42]

His Mystical Poetry

We find intimations about Sarmad's confessional identity in his mystical poetry, many conflicting. Sarmad's chief work, the *Rubaiyat-i-Sarmad*, contains between 320 (according to Ezekiel) and 340 (according to Gupta) quatrains, at least twenty of which illustrate Sarmad's relationship to religions — Islam mostly, but also Judaism, Christianity, Hinduism and Atheism. We also have one quatrain composed by Abhai Chand, included in the *Dabistan*, which is pertinent to our question.

In his *Rubaiyat*, we hear a humorous, antinomian voice, one which abjures religions for the sake of God. Surveying his 320 quatrains (to follow Ezekiel's text and numbering), we discover the following motifs:

(1) Four quatrains express disdain for organized religion in general;

(2) Eight quatrains convey contempt for Islam in general and even Sufism in particular. Another five praise wine-drinking, which of course is proscribed in Islam but which is a central metaphor for mystical ecstasy in Sufi literature. He also commits two Islamic blasphemies: in three quatrains he proclaims himself an idol-worshipper, and in one equates himself with the Prophet Muhammad;

(3) Seven quatrains poke fun at Hinduism, especially the sadhus, although in one he proclaims himself a devotee of Rama and Lakshman, and as mentioned, in three he proclaims himself an idolater, which may be an affirmation of a Hindu identity;

(4) In one quatrain he expresses disdain for Judaism.

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[41] Urdu *taskara*, p. 44.

[42] Urdu *taskara*, p. 47.

Of the first type of quatrain, those which express disdain for religion in general, number 5 (in Ezekiel's numbering) is typical:

> All search for happiness in worldly wealth or in temples, mosques and churches.
> O my Lord, save me from these, I pray these most earnestly.[43]

And in quatrain 313, we read his enigmatic words:

> O Sarmad! Thou hast worked havoc in attacking organized
> religion. Thou has sacrificed
> Thy religion for a Man whose eyes are red with intoxication.
> All thy wealth hast thou thrown at the feet of the Master,
> who is an idol-worshipper.[44]

Islam, however, is his favorite target for derision. He lampoons the Sufi's woolen cloak (*Suf*), the Ka'aba, and piety in general. For example, quatrain 17 reads:

> I care not for the rosary or the sacred thread.
> Am I pious? I care not.
> Nor do I wear the long woolen robe, it is so heavy.
> My concern is with my Friend (Master) alone.
> What do I care for the world's opinion.[45]

In quatrain 54, both the Ka'aba and the temple are objects of scorn:

> The Lover and the Loved, the idol and the idol-worshipper,
> Who is the cheat among them?
> Darkness prevails in the Ka'aba and the temple.
> Come into the Happy Valley of Oneness,
> Where only one color prevails.
> Think deeply. Who is the Lover and the Beloved, the flower and the thorn?[46]

And in quatrain 238:

> Repeat not stories about the Ka'aba and the temples, O Sarmad,
> For they are not the Way.[47]

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[43] Ezekiel, *Sarmad (Jewish Saint of India)*, p. 295.

[44] Ezekiel, *Sarmad (Jewish Saint of India)*, p. 378.

[45] Ezekiel, *Sarmad (Jewish Saint of India)*, p. 298.

[46] Ezekiel, *Sarmad (Jewish Saint of India)*, p. 308.

[47] Ezekiel, *Sarmad (Jewish Saint of India)*, p. 357.

In quatrain 218 Sarmad affirms Islamic practice but denies Muslim identity:

> True, I am an idol-worshipper;
> I am not of the faithful flock.
> I go to the mosque,
> But I am not a Muslim.[48]

Muslim piety and learning, as well as the emblematic cloak of the Sufi, are objects of scorn in quatrain 275:

> O men of piety! What sweet deliciousness
> Hast thou tasted in this hypocrisy? It is so insipid.
> Thou hast many flowing woolen mantles to show off thy piety,
> But don't forget that from the thread of thy rosary,
> Thou hast made a strong rope with which to bind thyself.
> As for myself, O Master, I can only pray for thy protection.[49]

Islam, of course, prohibits the consumption of wine (which is required in both Judaism and Christianity), and a number of Sufis have elevated drunkenness into a metaphor for mystical union. In accord with this antinomian trend, Sarmad wrote at least five quatrains which not only praise wine but demean prohibitions against wine, as quatrain 197:

> O men of piety, thou sayeth that wine is forbidden by religion;
> I tell thee that it is most sacred, and not unlawful.[50]

And quatrain 124:

> Who cannot tell the difference between true piety and hypocrisy?
> Not by hypocrisy, teaching and deceit is God realized.
> You (religious men) say, "Don't drink wine, but become pious like me."
> "Go and tell this to those who don't know you," I reply.[51]

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[48] Ezekiel, *Sarmad (Jewish Saint of India)*, p. 351.

[49] Ezekiel, *Sarmad (Jewish Saint of India)*, p. 367.

[50] Ezekiel, *Sarmad (Jewish Saint of India)*, p. 345.

[51] Ezekiel, *Sarmad (Jewish Saint of India)*, pp. 325-326.

In quatrain 46, Sarmad commits the blasphemy of comparing himself to the Prophet. This blasphemy was one of the charges brought against him.

> Sarmad has attained Love Eternal; and selflessness from the wine,
> Even the executioner's sword cannot make him sober.
> He hath attained the status of Muhammad and remaineth there.[52]

Sarmad was nearly as critical of Hinduism as he was of Islam, and the sadhus fared no better in his eyes than the Sufis. In several quatrains, he dismisses "Ka'aba and temple," and in others it is "the rosary and the sacred thread," meaning in both cases Islam and Hinduism. His criticisms are launched against both exoteric and esoteric varieties of Islam and Hinduism. For example, it is the sacred thread of the brahmin, albeit covered by the robe of the sadhu, which is Sarmad's object of scorn in quatrain 26:

> O sadhu, this robe of thine covers the sacred thread;
> 'Tis a deception involving struggle unending.
> Carry not this burden of shamefulness on thy shoulders,
> Then wilt thou avoid a thousand sufferings.[53]

It is the sadhu who is derided in quatrain 217:

> O mendicant with patched and ragged mantle,
> Why preach to me so much?
> Thou knowest nothing of real Love.
> My mind is engaged in more important work than learning piety;
> My heart is torn to pieces by Love of the Beloved.
> What does it care for the covering of a patched mantle?[54]

So far as shedding light on Sarmad's religious identity, one of the most puzzling quatrains is number 320. In it, Sarmad apparently declares his abandonment of Judaism and Islam, and a conversion to Hinduism. Despite this quatrain, however, of all the options available

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[52] Ezekiel, *Sarmad (Jewish Saint of India)*, p. 306.

[53] Ezekiel, *Sarmad (Jewish Saint of India)*, p. 301.

[54] Ezekiel, *Sarmad (Jewish Saint of India)*, pp. 350-351.

no scholar nor traditional biographer has ascribed a Hindu identity to him. The quatrain reads:

> O Sarmad! Thou hast earned much worldly renown,
> Come to Islam and got away from Judaism.
> What shortcoming didst thou find in the Prophet and in God,
> That thou turned away from God and the Prophet
> And become a disciple of Ram and Lakshman.[55]

Another wrinkle in this tapestry of confessional identification and non-identification is found in the only extant quatrain by Sarmad's lover and disciple, Abhai Chand, found in the *Dabistan*:

> I submit to Moses' law; I am of thy religion, and a guardian of thy way;
> I am a Rabbi of the Yahuds, a Kafir, a Muselman.[56]

If we are to take all of Sarmad's quatrains at face value, and if we are to assume that Abhai Chand speaks for him, then we are left with a set of paradoxical assertions:

(1) that he simultaneously was a rabbi and that he abandoned Judaism;

(2) that he was not a Muslim and that he was;

(3) that he was an idol-worshipper and a devotee of Hindu gods but opposed both the brahmins and the sadhus; and

(4) that he opposed Mullah and Sufi alike, but that he frequented mosques and wrote mystical poetry which was very much in the Sufi tradition.

To try and make sense of these contradictory assertions, we must view them against the background of the popular religious life of medieval North India and the religious life and policies of the Court of the Mughals.

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[55] Ezekiel, *Sarmad (Jewish Saint of India)*, pp. 379-380.

[56] Shea and Troyer, trans., *The Dabistan*, 1901, p. 299.

Religious Life during the Mughal Era

Religious life in North India during the medieval period (roughly 1000-1756) was dominated by cycles of conflict and accommodation between Islam and Hinduism.

Even before the arrival of the Mughals, on the popular level this great cultural accommodation expressed itself in a variety of syncretistic movements: Sufism; Ramananda's (ca. 1400 — ca. 1470) non-caste-based devotion to Rama as supreme god; monotheistic, *bhakti*-oriented Vaisnava movements such as Vallabhacarya's (1479-?); the Kabir Panth founded by Benarsi Muslim weaver and poet-saint Kabir (1398? 1440?-1518); and Sikhism founded by Guru Nanak (1469-1538).[57] As the period has been summarized, "Widespread religious movements, having... their roots partly in the vivifying contacts of Hinduism with Islam, had produced a religious enthusiasm among the masses that was transforming the older Brahmanical religion."[58] Indeed, in the religious crucible that was medieval North India, caste lines were often blatantly disregarded and confessional barriers hardly existed. In such an eclectic religious environment, Sarmad's spiritual peregrinations are not so remarkable as they might have been during other historical periods.

On the level of courtly culture and the government's policies towards religious pluralism, there were oscillations from emperor to emperor. Akbar's court highlighted interreligious discussions and mystical conclaves, traditions echoed by Dara Shikoh. In his capital at Fatehpur Sikri, near Agra, Akbar built himself a throne on a platform in the middle of a pool of water; the four walkways to the throne would be occupied by Sunni, Shi'a, Jesuit, Hindu, Zoroastrian, or Jaina sages who would debate issues and doctrines. This resulted in a policy he called *suhl-i-kulh*, or equal respect toward all religions, a policy simultaneously praised by minority religious leaders and scorned as a heresy

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[57] F.E. Keay, *Kabir and His Followers*, Delhi, Sri Satguru Publications, Sri Garib Das Oriental Series No. 171, 1996 [1931], pp. 27-28.

[58] Ikram, *Muslim Civilization in India*, p. 232.

by Sunni leaders.[59] Akbar's openness to other religions led to his being claimed to have been a Christian, a Jain, and a Parsee (Zoroastrian), as well as a Sufi[60] — much like Sarmad.

Mughal polity ranged from official hostility towards Hinduism (and Sufism and Shi'a Islam) to tolerance for religious diversity reminiscent of the third century BCE Buddhist emperor, Ashoka Maurya, and back to stern repression, Hindu temple-razing and inequitable taxation, policies which were later modified yet again.

Even before the demise of the Delhi Sultanate in the fourteenth century, the social fact of religious syncretism was reflected in government policies which allowed Hindus to govern themselves according to Hindu law, so long as they paid their *jizya* (non-believer's tax) to Muslim rulers. This toleration was anathema to the stern-minded Babur (1483-1530), the founder of the Mughal dynasty whose policy was to suppress Hinduism by destroying Hindu temples, often constructing a masjid on the site. Within fifty years, his grandson Akbar (1556-1605) reversed the *jizya* in 1565. Akbar's *suhl-i-kuhl* policy was to be in force until Aurangzeb seized power and reinstated the hated *jizya* in 1679. Perhaps to Aurangzeb's mind, the flamboyant syncretism of Sarmad was too much to bear. Perhaps he was motivated by the need to increase the government's revenues.[61] Whether Aurangzeb's unpopular policies led to the downfall of the Mughal Empire is debatable,[62] but what is clear is that the remarkable courtly culture of amicable debate

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[59] Akbar's liberal religious policies were "resented as being in substance an attack on the Muhammadan religion," according to Vincent A. Smith, *Akbar, the Great Mogul*, New Delhi, S. Chand & Co., 1966, p. 132.

[60] Smith, *Akbar, the Great Mogul*, pp. 115-119.

[61] Ikram, *Muslim Civilization in India*, p. 198. Under tremendous popular pressure, the *jizya* was revoked by Aurangzeb's successor in 1720. S.M. Edwards and H.L.O. Garrett, *Mughal Rule in India*, Delhi, S. Chand., 1930, p. 216.

[62] Ikram, *Muslim Civilization in India*, p. 199. As Edwards and Garrett wrote, "... Aurangzeb reimposed the *jizya*... and followed a policy of destroying as many Hindu temples as possible... goods belonging to Hindu merchants were subjected to a custom's duty twice as heavy as that demanded from Muhammadan traders." *Mughal Rule in India*, Delhi, pp. 153-154.

among religions and an imperial policy of tolerance toward religious minorities, instituted by Akbar and recalled by Dara Shikoh, ended with Aurangzeb's reign, and with them the possibility of a Sarmad in the Mughal Court.

Conclusions

Of course, we cannot know what Sarmad himself felt about his religious identity, whether in his own mind he remained a Jew, or became something else, whether Sufi and/or Muslim, Hindu, Atheist or "Idolater."

But we can view him against the cultural background in India, his adopted home. And this places him in a most remarkable milieu. On one hand, on the popular level, there was the interreligious, mystical crucible of Kabir, Ramananda and Nanak, influential figures with religious identities nearly as complex as Sarmad's. On the public level, we can view the oscillations of Mughal policy about religions, from the triumphialism of Babur, to the sycretistic, mystical *din-i-illahi* of Akbar, to the combative sterness of Aurangzeb. While his passion and poetry speak for themselves, Sarmad is less singular or idiosyncratic when viewed in the context of the culture of Kabir and Akbar.

We may also observe the processes by which his religious identity was commandeered *ex post facto* by the official Islam of Delhi's Jama Masjid, and how it was imposed upon by a modern Hindu sect, the Radha Soami Satsang, and by scholars such as Fischel, Wali, and Gupta.

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ASCETICS AND AESTHETICS IN THE *ANALECTS*

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Summary

The ancient Confucian *Analects* (*Lunyu*) often has been interpreted as nothing more than the "pure" ethical teachings of a humanistic Chinese sage, "Confucius" (*Kongzi* or *Kong Qiu*). A careful and historically-sensitive interpretation of the *Lunyu* reveals that the text is capable of resisting this reading, providing clues to an altogether different Confucius — not the storied pedant who dispenses common-sense wisdom to office-seeking disciples, but a spiritual teacher who guides his pupils toward sagehood through a combination of ascetic and aesthetic disciplines. Key references in the text to material privation, music and dance, and the exemplary disciple Yan Hui reveal how one fifth-century BCE Confucian (*Ru*) sect sought to preserve and construct a memory of the "historical Confucius" as a Master who instructed his disciples in ascetic disciplines, linking them to aesthetic techniques of ecstasy, and celebrated one disciple in particular, Yan Hui, as the living embodiment of his esoteric Way. Instead of proposing either a traditional, harmonizing hermeneutic of the text, or a demythologization which might reveal the "real" or "historical" Confucius and his followers, this essay argues for the toleration of multiple, even mutually-contradicting voices in this classic of ancient Chinese spirituality. A primary goal for future research on the text should be the examination of conflicts of interpretation among early Confucian sects competing to safeguard the Master's legacy.

Introduction: readings and resistances

In the study of early Chinese thought and practice, to remark on the prosaic and pragmatic character of the *Lunyu*, or Confucian *Analects*, is commonplace. Herbert Fingarette introduces his groundbreaking study of the text with the confession: "When I began to read Confucius, I found him to be a prosaic and parochial moralizer; his collected sayings, the *Analects*, seemed to me an archaic irrelevance."[1] Perhaps it is due to this perceived blandness of the text that Western

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[1] *Confucius — The Secular as Sacred* (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1972), vii.

commentators since Pierre Bayle (1646-1706) and Gottfried Wilhelm von Leibniz (1646-1716) have identified it as a repository of pure ethical teaching, wholly free of religious sensibilities or motivations or at the very most, a landmark in the literature of "natural theology."[2] In this century, Chinese and other East Asian exegetes of the text have often followed suit, leading to the widespread dismissal of the possibility that the *Lunyu* might, in some way, function as a religious text.

Yet a careful and historically-sensitive interpretation of the *Lunyu* reveals that the text is capable of resisting this reading, providing clues to an altogether different Confucius — not the storied pedant who dispenses common-sense wisdom to careerist disciples, but a spiritual teacher who guides his pupils toward sagehood through a combination of ascetic and aesthetic disciplines. Moreover, the Confucius who emerges from the sort of reading proposed here is not the magisterial "perfectly holy teacher of antiquity, Master Kong" (*zhi sheng xianshi Kongzi*) memorialized in Confucian temples from the medieval period onward, but an unapotheosized Master whose remembered words point not only to his failure to win government office, but also to his failure to equal the spiritual achievement of one of his own students.[3] To incarnate such a reading, so vastly different from most previous interpretations of the text and its "hero," one must turn to three key sets of references in the text: allusions to material privation, to music and dance, and to the disciple Yan Hui.

Asceticism and privation

Allusions to material privation in the *Lunyu* are mostly concentrated in what is now chapter 7 of the received text, or *Zhang Hou Lun* (Marquis Zhang *Analects*, collated by the Western Han compiler Zhang Yu from several different regional sources, sometime before his death in

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[2] See J.J. Clarke, *Oriental Enlightenment: The Encounter Between Asian and Western Thought* (London: Routledge, 1997), pp. 44-48.

[3] See John K. Shryock, *The Origin and Development of the State Cult of Confucius* (New York: Paragon Book Reprint Corporation, 1966), p. 237 and *passim*.

5 BCE).[4] Although an earlier version of the text — discovered in what is known as Tomb 40 at the Dingxian (or Dingzhou) archaeological site, not far from Beijing, in 1973, and dated to sometime before the tomb's initial sealing in 55 BCE — is now available, it seems to be both too fragmentary and too similar to the received text to upset previous interpretations of the *Lunyu*'s textual history.

Chapter 7 mentions material privation in a string of nearly-sequential passages, beginning with 7.13, which describes the Master's "caution" (*shen*) regarding fasting, warfare, and illness (*qi zhan bing*). E. Bruce Brooks and A. Taeko Brooks see these three items as intrinsically related to state cult activities, but given the prominence of fasting and other forms of material privation in the passages which follow (which do not reference state cult in any way), their view hardly seems conclusive.[5] Subsequent references to abstinence from, or indifference to, food and/or drink, are as follows: after hearing a performance. of the *Shao* court music, the Master "didn't know the taste of meat" (*bu zhi rou wei*) (7.14); the Master is quoted as saying that there is "pleasure" (or perhaps "music" — *le/yue*)[6] in subsisting on a diet of coarse food and plain water (7.16); and the Master is said to have included "forgetting to eat" (*wang shi*) in his self-description (7.19). What can this series of references to material privation tell us about the practices taught

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[4] For a discussion of the textual history and variants of the *Lunyu* (including the newly-discovered variant mentioned below), see Roger T. Ames and Henry Rosemont, Jr., *The Analects of Confucius: A Philosophical Translation* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1998), pp. 7-9 and 274-275. Also helpful is Anne Cheng, "*Lun-yü*" in Michael Loewe, ed., *Early Chinese Texts* (Berkeley: Institute of East Asian Studies, 1993), pp. 313-323.

[5] *The Original Analects: Sayings of Confucius and His Successors* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998), p. 124. The Brookses also insist that this passage is an interpolation which does not properly belong with the others in this semi-sequence, but as with many of their arguments along these lines, they do not martial convincing support in their favor.

[6] The difficulty of translating these homographic characters will be remarked upon in the section on music and dance in the text below.

by the Master — or, at least, about teachings reconstructed in the collective memory of his students?

It is, of course, possible to interpret these passages in tandem with others (4.9, 9.27, 10.7, 15.32) which seem to denote little more than high-minded tolerance of poverty in the pursuit of learning and/or moral excellence. Additionally, there are other passages — such as 15.31, in which the Master appears to denigrate fasting as a contemplative technique — which deplore food avoidance for the sake of contemplation (*bu shi... yi si*) and oppose it to learning (*bu ru xue ye*). However, it is certainly true that the noble endurance of privation may coincide with the deliberate avoidance of, or studied indifference to, food and other material necessities. Early *Ru* ("Confucians") may have practiced both. Moreover, when considering the mutual interpretive relationship between passages in the *Lunyu*, it is important to problematize the notion of the text as a coherent whole. Even the most conservative of modern commentators do not deny that the text assumed its present shape only over a period of time, while more radical opinions suggest that the text required over two hundred years of accretion before taking the form known today.[7] Finally, John Makeham has pointed out that pre-Qin (c. 221 BCE) thinkers understood the term *Ru* to be a heterogeneous concept denoting many different traditions, all of which regarded themselves as heirs to the "historical Confucius," and each of which may have contributed to the formation of various layers of the received *Lunyu* text.[8]

Thus, at least one stratum of the *Lunyu* as we now have it devotes significant attention (nearly ten percent of its entire content) to the theme of food avoidance or indifference to material sustenance. If it is true that a particular community of *Ru* interpreters are responsible for that portion of the text, we must ask the crucial historical and sociolog-

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[7] See D. C. Lau, *Confucius — The Analects* (Hong Kong: Chinese University Press, 1992), pp. 263-275, and also Brooks, pp. 201-248.

[8] "Between Chen and Cai: *Zhuangzi* and the Analects," in Roger T. Ames, ed., *Wandering at Ease in the Zhuangzi* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1998), pp. 92-94.

ical question which any study of early Chinese thought and practice demands: what is the character of the community of practitioners to which this text belongs?[9] Arguments for the historical location of chapter 7 in the overall compositional sequence are either vague or unpersuasive; the best that we can say, it seems, is that this chapter may be related to chapter 8, at least in part, and that it may belong to an earlier rather than a later stratum of the *Lunyu* as a whole.[10] Building on the premise that this chapter was produced by a group of disciples still within living memory of the historical Master (c. 400s BCE), it can be assumed that this disciple group found particular value in the sayings of the Master which pertained to ascetic practices undertaken in pursuit of the *Ru* path. Even though later sayings (such as 15.31) exist which seem to counter this ascetic tendency in chapter 7, this may mean only that a different (and almost certainly later, historically speaking) disciple group disagreed with the remembered/reconstructed teaching recorded by the chapter 7 group, and found it expedient to voice its disapproval through the mouth of "Confucius," as did many Warring States (c. 403-221 BCE) authors. The argument advanced thus far here is only that one (perhaps marginal) sect of fifth-century BCE *Ru* acted to preserve a memory of the historical Confucius as a Master who instructed his disciples in ascetic techniques.[11] This presentation of chapter 7 is quite consistent with other passages in the chap-

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[9] On the importance of this question in the interrogation of early Chinese texts, see Nathan Sivin, "On the Word 'Taoist' as a Source of Perplexity," *History of Religions* 17/3-4 (February-May 1978): 303-330, and Russell Kirkland, "The Historical Contours of Taoism in China," *Journal of Chinese Religions* 25 (Fall 1997): 57-82, especially pp. 64-65.

[10] Lau advances no distinct argument for the dating of chapter 7, asserting only that it — like the other chapters of the received text — was edited by disciples who survived the historical Confucius; see Lau, *ibid.* As for the Brookses, they admit that "there are no direct indications" of the chapter's date, relying instead on conjecture to produce their date of 450 BCE; see Brooks, p. 124.

[11] Although the argument is made for the existence of an early sect of "ascetic Confucians," one cannot make the claim that this body of practices represents some sort of "pure" or "core" *Ru* tradition. Indeed, given the highly heterogeneous nature

ter, which make references to other, possibly allied techniques of self-cultivation: contact with spiritual authorities such as the Duke of Zhou (*Zhou Gong*) through dreams, or oneiric communion (7.5); a sequence of prescribed practice which progresses from fixing one's thoughts on the Way (*zhi yu Dao*) to the culminating point of "losing oneself in the arts" (*yu yu 'yi*) (7.6); and the curious combination of aesthetic rapture which leads to ascetic practice cited in 7.14.

Losing and completing oneself through music/dance

The possibility of links between ascetic and aesthetic practices in this particular tradition of early *Ru*ism, however, prompts attention to other passages in the text in which the perplexing characters *le* or *yue* appear. Several translators have commented upon the difficulty of rendering this graph with certainty into Western languages.[12] During the early Zhou (c. 1050-770 BCE), this character had at least three distinct pronunciations and semantic sets: *yue* ("music"), *le* ("joy/to enjoy"), and *liao* ("to cure").[13] According to A.C. Graham, this early phonetic differentiation masks a common fund of meaning, in which the concept of "music" (which includes what we now call "dance") is conflated with the concept of "joy," and possibly the notion of curative or beneficent efficacy, as well.[14] Thus, although the character's particular meaning certainly shifts between textual contexts, it conveys a general sense of aesthetic ardor and satisfaction. Edward L. Shaughnessy has discussed how the genre of early Zhou court song changed from communal liturgical hymn to singular artistic performance as players and audiences became more and more distant from the original historical context of collective ancestral cult. Just

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of the text as we have it now, it seems impossible to articulate any such claim for any discrete strand of the *Lunyu*.

[12] See D.C. Lau, *Mencius*, Volume I (Hong Kong: Chinese University Press, 1984), p. 27, n. 1, and A.C. Graham, *Disputers of the Tao* (La Salle, IL: Open Court, 1989), pp. 259-260.

[13] See Axel Schuessler, *A Dictionary of Early Zhou Chinese* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1987), pp. 798, 365-366, 382.

[14] See Graham, *ibid.*

as ritual became the purview of individual specialists (of whom the historical Confucius may have been one) by the end of the early Zhou, music/dance gradually became a spectator, rather than a participatory, activity.[15] The early *Ru* who helped to form the text of chapter 7 as we now know it may have been among those who took on the esoteric responsibility of performing — and evaluating — music/dance.

A great many passages in the *Lunyu* seem to support this hypothesis. At various points (doubtless corresponding to various *Ru* sects, or various generations of the same sect), the text makes pronouncements on the importance of performing the correct music/dance (9.15, 13.3, 15.11, 17.16), the inseparability of music/dance and virtues like *ren* = ("cohumanity") (3.3), a circular model for musical/dance performance which moves from chaos to order and back to chaos again, "in order to complete" (*yi cheng*) (3.23), the "completing" function of music/dance (*cheng yu yue*) (8.8), and the general rapture inspired by virtuoso musical/dance performance (8.15). The most striking instance of the priority assigned to the aesthetic faculty within human beings may be 2.4, in which the Master's moral ontology nears its apex when "at sixty [years of age] the ears then become attuned" (*liu shi er er shun*).[16] This achievement is the last crucial step to be taken before, at seventy years of age, one can "follow the desire of one's heart-and-mind without transgressing the correct pattern" (*cong xin suo yu bu yu ju*). Like many other "craft" metaphors in the *Lunyu*, the use of the graph *ju* ("carpenter's square, patterning device") suggests that self-cultivation is concerned with attuning oneself to a preordained pattern of being and perception — in this case, not only in order to actualize *Ru* perfection, but also to make a place for oneself as a ritual specialist.

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[15] "From Liturgy to Literature: The Ritual Context of the Earliest Poems in the *Book of Poetry*," in *Before Confucius: Studies in the Creation of the Chinese Classics* (Albany: State University of New York Press), pp. 165-195.

[16] Until the discovery of the Dingzhou *Lunyu*, many commentators felt that the character *er* ("ear") in this passage must have been a textual corruption, but the character appears clearly in the Dingzhou text. See Ames and Rosemont, p. 232, n. 24.

Certainly, this corresponds to the portrait of the early *Ru* presented by Robert Eno, who argues that

> Ruism was not primarily a political movement, but was first and foremost groups of men meeting to practice and discuss ritual ceremonies and music, immediately motivated by the ideal expectation of attaining transcendent wisdom and the practical expectation of employment as a ritual Master.[17]

The testimony of art historians and archaeologists adds force to this suggestion. In a discussion of the fabulous set of musical bells discovered in the tomb of Marquis Yi of Zeng (d. 433 BCE) at Sui Xian in 1978, Robert W. Bagley has suggested that the extraordinary precision of the bells' design — all the more extraordinary for the apparent absence of complex mathematical models in early China — prompts the speculation that "bell masters" transmitted their highly refined art very carefully to disciples.[18] Benjamin I. Schwartz has also speculated that the paired disciplines of poetry (*shi*) and music/dance *yue*) in early China represented forms of contemplative practice, which required careful instruction, practice, performance, and appreciation.[19] Finally, in his own study of Marquis Yi's magnificent bell orchestra, Lothar von Falkenhausen puts forth the idea that, as the sense of the extraordinary importance of ritual music and dance inherited from the early Zhou met with the increasing political irrelevance of court aesthetics and musical technologies during the Warring States, Chinese thinkers developed discursive spaces for the theoretical discussion of music/dance and its correlative connections with the greater cosmos.[20]

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[17] *The Confucian Creation of Heaven: Philosophy and the Defense of Ritual Mastery* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1990), p. 14.

[18] "Bells, Scales, and Pitch Standards: The Archaeology of Music in Ancient China" (lecture, University of California at Berkeley, 23 April 1998). Excellent photographic images of the Yi tomb bells, along with a brief archaeological essay by Feng Guangsheng, can be found in *Zenghouyimu Wenwuyishu* (Hubei: Hubei Meishu Chubanshe, 1996), plates 1-57 (pp. 8-34) and pp. 158-162.

[19] *The World of Thought in Ancient China* (Cambridge: Belknap Press, 1985), pp. 86-87.

[20] *Suspended Music: Chime-Bells in the Culture of Bronze Age China* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), pp. 3-4 and 310-324.

By the third century BCE, disenfranchised *Ru* aestheticians were writing about how "all musical tones are born in the hearts-and-minds of human beings" (*fan yin zhi qi you ren xin sheng ye*), even though there is little evidence of the sort of large-scale political investment in music/dance that made bell orchestras like Marquis Yi's possible some two hundred years earlier.[21]

Although we can surmise that there was a group of early *Ru* who made it their business to master song and ceremonial even as they used ascetic practices to further their self-cultivation, thus far this general speculation has only been supported by nonspecific statements, many pseudepigraphically inserted into the mouth of the historical Confucius. There is, however, an individual life, narrated in the *Lunyu* across its many layers of history and authorship, in which this dialectic of asceticism and aestheticism takes on flesh as well as spirit: the biographical statements about the disciple, Yan Hui.

The embodiment of the early Ru *ideal*

Biographical — not to mention hagiographical — fragments about Yan Hui are scattered across the text, but by far the largest concentration of Yan Hui material is in what is now chapter 11. The Brookses suggest that Yan Hui may have been a near relation of the Master; based on this possible kinship tie, they explain the lavish treatment of Yan Hui in chapter 11 as the work of a Kong family member who was interested in upholding the standard of kinship-based discipleship (as opposed to those disciples who were from outside of the family, such as Zilu).[22] If this is so, then a careful reading of chapter 11 goes far in helping us to understand the values upheld by at least one group of Kong family *Ru* in the century or so after the death of the Master.

Chapter 11 establishes Yan Hui as an adept in three principal arenas of *Ru* practice: he is among those whose *de* (magical-moral power[23])

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[21] *Liji*, "Yueji" (Shanghai: Guji Chubanshe, 1987), p. 204.

[22] See Brooks, p. 222, 292.

[23] On the translation of *de* as "magical-moral power," see Vassili Kryukov, "Symbols of Power and Communication in Pre-Confucian China (On the Anthropology of

is *xing* (put into practice) (11.3); he is unparalleled in his ability to endure privation (11.19); and he is said by the Master to have been the only disciple ever to have truly *hao xue* ("loved study," understanding "study" as a term for mental self-cultivation[24]) (11.7, itself a repetition of the earlier 6.3). Of him, the Master says that "there is nothing I say that he doesn't like" (*yu wu yan wu suo bu yue*) (11.4). This layer of the text also describes, in moving detail, the deep and abiding affection between Yan Hui and the Master: Yan Hui tells the Master that "while you live, how dare I die?" (*zi zai hui he gan si*) (11.23), while the Master's outpouring of grief at Yan Hui's early death is unprecedented (11.7, 11.9, 11.10, 11.11). Nearly twenty percent of the overall sayings in chapter 11 are devoted to narrating some detail related to the death of Yan Hui, although the Brookses doubt that this biographical feature consists of much more than pious legend.[25] Whether or not Yan Hui actually predeceased or survived the historical Confucius, clearly the *Ru* who assembled the text which became chapter 11 found it valuable to celebrate him as a kind of *Ru* saint, martyred by fate at a young age. What can this tell us about the community of practice associated with the text?

Yan Hui emerges from the hagiographical treatment of chapter 11 as an exemplar skilled in the application of his *de*, ascetic endurance of privation, and mental self-cultivation (which may, or may not, have involved meditation techniques for fourth-century *Ru*). What the community of practice celebrates in its texts, it seeks to actualize in its own collective disciplines and aspirations. Thus, we can surmise that the fourth-century *Ru* who produced this concentrated Yan Hui hagiography were devoted to the application of *de*, asceticism related to

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De): Preliminary Assumptions," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* LVIII/2 (1995): 314-333, and Philip J. Ivanhoe, "The Concept of *De* ('Virtue') in the *Laozi*," in Mark Csikszentmihalyi and Philip J. Ivanhoe, eds., *Religious and Philosophical Aspects of the Laozi* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1999), pp. 239-258.

[24] On the meaning of *xue* as "mental self-cultivation" during the early periods of the *Ru* movement, see Brooks, p. 292.

[25] See Brooks, p. 293.

food and poverty, and mental self-cultivation. The question is then: what were the ways in which these *Ru* sought to actualize their ideals, embodied in the figure of Yan Hui? An examination of hagiographical Yan Hui passages found outside of chapter 11 can help to establish links between the early *Ru* practices of asceticism and devotion to music/dance outlined above.

Apart from chapter 11, the next largest concentrations of hagiographical passages devoted to Yan Hui are found in chapters 6 and 9. It is not only in chapter 11 that we encounter Yan Hui as the adept whose practice unites ascetic and aesthetic disciplines and impulses, but also in these (probably earlier) chapters. 6.3 originates the saying about Yan Hui's exemplary *hao xue* ("love of mental self-cultivation") and premature death, while 6.7 celebrates the stamina of Yan Hui's *xin* ("heart-and-mind"), which could "go for three months without departing from co-humanity" (*qi xin san yue wei ren*). 6.11 describes Yan Hui as a *xian* ("worthy, exemplar") on whose *yue/le* ("music/dance" or "joy") privation has no diminishing effect (*bu gai qi yue/le*), presumably due to his formidable powers of mental concentration. While chapter 6 celebrates Yan Hui, the adept among adepts, chapter 9 offers a portrait of the star student, still very much the learner from Confucius: 9.11 narrates a long testimonial by Yan Hui regarding the Master's pedagogy, balanced by the Master's own comments on his student's abilities in 9.20-9.21. Thus, while it is probable that two different communities of *Ru* practice (either two separate communities which coincided historically, or the same community in earlier and later incarnations) produced what are now chapters 6 and 9, it is evident that these communities shared a common desire to preserve or invent the memory of Yan Hui as a superlative spiritual athlete, cut down in his prime.

This representation of Yan Hui as the ascetic/aesthetic *Ru* practitioner *par excellence* is rounded out by the remaining references to him in the *Lunyu*, in which he is variously depicted as seemingly (but not actually) stupid and thus quite inferior to the Master (2.9, 12.1), every bit as talented and accomplished as the Master (7.11), and very much the superior of the Master (5.9). It is notable that the figure of Yan Hui is wholly absent from chapters 16-20 — those sections of the text

which are widely acknowledged to be its latest strata. If it is true that the tradition of Yan Hui's kinship to the Master (whether imagined or remembered) was key to his beatification by early *Ru* within the Kong lineage, then perhaps Yan Hui's disappearance during the final stages of the *Lunyu*'s accretional development can be explained as the waning of Kong family influence over the developing *Ru* sects. Meanwhile, Yan Hui makes a sudden appearance in *Zhuangzi* 6.7 (c. 320 BCE) as a meditational adept who — very much in the spirit of *Lunyu* 2.9 and 5.9 — startles the Master into reversing their student-teacher relationship with a display of his contemplative prowess.[26] If the "Daoist" appropriation of Yan Hui as one of their own seems bizarre or improbable, one should keep in mind that no less orthodox a Confucian than Han Yu (762-828) believed that Master Zhuang himself was a follower of Confucius.[27]

Conclusion: communities and conflicts of practice

We have seen how various layers of the *Lunyu* and other texts — distinguished from one another both by historical origins and sectarian authorship — stochastically (that is, randomly yet in an overlapping fashion) represent certain early *Ru* ideals of the fusion of ascetic and aesthetic practices in the service of self-cultivation. The marriage of apophatic asceticism and aesthetic rapture, conveyed to the initiated through a kind of *Ru* gnosis (possibly through Kong kinship networks of masters and disciples), is incarnated in the literature by the hagiographical figure of Yan Hui, and contextualized historically by the phenomenal sophistication and esoteric transmission of late Zhou and Warring States musical technologies and the increasing theoreti-

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[26] See Burton Watson, trans., *The Complete Works of Chuang Tzu* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1968), pp. 90-91. For the dating of *Zhuangzi* 6.7, see Graham, p. 172-173.

[27] See Makeham, p. 75. Graham also envisions the author of *Zhuangzi* 6.7 as something of a maverick *Ru*; see his *Chuang-tzu: The Inner Chapters* (London: Unwin Paperbacks, 1986), pp. 18, 117.

cal and mystagogical attention paid to music throughout the Warring States and into the early Han.

Yet it is clear that the community (-ies) of *Ru* practice which venerated Yan Hui and sought to emulate his example did not, in the end, win out. The final layers of the *Lunyu* — approximately twenty-five percent of the total cumulative text as it existed by the first century BCE — pay no attention whatsoever to Yan Hui or the "Confucius" who honors him as the Master's master student. Instead, these later layers — and others in between the Yan Hui hagiographical accounts in the earlier strata of the text — obey the impulses of the communities of *Ru* practice which created or collated them, concentrating on the corrupting influence of wealth and profit-seeking, the decline in the socio-political order, and the teaching of other disciples within the early *Ru* sects, who probably represent the leadership traditions within the various *Ru* sects responsible for these texts. The final result is a great mish-mash of competing, though sometimes complementary, traditions, each of which claims to be the authoritative record of the Master's original teaching. In this sense, reading the *Lunyu* is less like having an argument with a single author and more like observing a cacophony of arguments between a plurality of authors.

In this light, it is unconvincing to read the *Lunyu* with a harmonizing hermeneutic, which would smooth out the many conflicts between the communities of *Ru* practice which brought the various layers of the text into being. Nor is it persuasive to read the text as a collection of disparate traditions about the historical Confucius, some of which represent the "real" Master's authentic teaching and others of which are mere apocrypha, to be discarded by the enlightened reader. The former approach has characterized much of the commentary, both Chinese and Western, on the text in this century; the latter approach is embodied by the Brookses' radical criticism of the text, which resembles nothing so much as Rudolf Bultmann's famous "demythologization" of New Tes-

tament texts, begun during the 1930s and continued today by members of the "Jesus Seminar."[28]

Instead, what is called for by the evident plurality of traditions embedded and advocated within the text is a hermeneutic which can tolerate, even affirm, multiple voices for "the" early Confucian tradition. If the work of Xunzi (c. 200s BCE) is an attempt to address the conflicts of interpretation among various *Ru* sects, then we must seek for the roots of this fracture within the earliest *Ru* texts yet known to us — beginning with the *Lunyu*.[29]

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[28] See Rudolf Bultmann, "The Primitive Christian Kerygma and the Historical Jesus," in Carl A. Braaten and Roy A. Harrisville, eds., *The Historical Jesus and the Kerygmatic Christ* (New York and Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1964), and Marcus Borg, *Jesus: A New Vision* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1987), *inter alia*.

[29] On the pluralistic context of the *Xunzi*, see Graham, *Disputers of the Tao*, pp. 235-238.

THE REBIRTH OF MYTH?: NIETZSCHE'S ETERNAL RECURRENCE AND ITS ROMANTIC ANTECEDENTS[1]

ROBERT A. YELLE

Summary

There is increasing evidence of the influence of various Romantic thinkers on Nietzsche's early philosophy, especially on *The Birth of Tragedy*, with its announcement or prediction of a rebirth of myth. The prophetic *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, which Nietzsche introduced with the words "tragedy begins," expresses his later philosophy, particularly his central doctrine of the Eternal Recurrence, in symbols, parables, and riddles, suggesting an attempt at mythopoeia. However, the critical, ironic, and parodying elements in Nietzsche's later philosophy have led to its characterization as "antimyth." This essay demonstrates that Nietzsche's idea and symbolism of the Eternal Recurrence as a temporal cycle of opposites represented by various forms of the circle, especially the ouroborus or serpent biting its own tail, and associated with Zoroaster, Heraclitus, and Dionysus, was influenced by the tradition of Romantic mythology. Before the publication of *The Birth of Tragedy*, Nietzsche encountered the writings of Johann Jakob Bachofen and Friedrich Creuzer, where the cycle of opposites is identified as a specifically mythic idea, which developed later into a philosophy, as metonymically represented in the relationship between the myth-maker Zoroaster and the philosopher Heraclitus. In *The Birth of Tragedy*, the cycle of opposites became for Nietzsche a symbol of the unity of myth and philosophy, and the rebirth of the former from the self-overcoming of the latter. This symbol continued to serve Nietzsche throughout his career as a model for his own development as a philosopher. The Eternal Recurrence appears to have been his own attempt to unite myth and philosophy, through the transformation of an originally Romantic mythological idea into its opposite, and the adoption of a symbolic and "mythic" style of expression.

In his earliest published work, *The Birth of Tragedy* ("*GT*"[2]) (1872), Friedrich Nietzsche announces or predicts a rebirth of tragedy and myth in a manner that recalls Friedrich Schlegel's hope for a "new mythology." Apart from Nietzsche's own later confession of the "Romantic" nature of *GT*[3], an increasing amount of scholarship has demonstrated his appropriation and development in that work of both mythological theories and specific symbols found in Romantic thinkers including Schlegel, Friedrich Creuzer, Friedrich Schelling, and Johann

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[2] The following system of abbreviations is used to refer to Nietzsche's works:

EH: *Ecce Homo*; trans. Walter Kaufmann in *Basic Writings of Nietzsche* (New York: Modern Library, 1968)

FW: *Die fröhliche Wissenschaft*; trans. Walter Kaufmann, *The Gay Science* (New York: Vintage, 1974)

GM: *Zur Genealogie der Moral*; trans. *On the Genealogy of Morals* in Kaufmann, *Basic Writings*

GT: *Die Geburt der Tragödie*; trans. *The Birth of Tragedy* in Kaufmann, *Basic Writings*

JGB: *Jenseits von Gut und Böse*; trans. *Beyond Good and Evil* in Kaufmann, *Basic Writings*

KGB: Friedrich Nietzsche, *Briefwechsel: Kritische Gesamtausgabe*, ed. Giorgio Colli and Mazzino Montinari (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1975ff.)

KGW: Friedrich Nietzsche, *Werke: Kritische Gesamtausgabe*, ed. Giorgio Colli and Mazzino Montinari (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1967ff.)

KSA: Friedrich Nietzsche, *Sämtliche Werke: Kritische Studienausgabe*, ed. Giorgio Colli and Mazzino Montinari, 2d. ed. (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1988)

MA: *Menschliches, Allzumenschliches*; trans. Marion Faber, *Human, All Too Human* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1984)

PHG: *Die Philosophie im tragischen Zeitalter der Griechen*; trans. Marianne Cowan, *Philosophy in the Tragic Age of the Greeks* (Chicago: Henry Regnery, 1962)

Za: *Also sprach Zarathustra*; trans. Walter Kaufmann, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* (New York: Penguin, 1966)

Unless otherwise indicated, references are to section rather than page numbers, translations from Nietzsche's writings are from the editions given above, and all other translations are my own.

[3] This self-characterization appears in Nietzsche's "Attempt at a Self-Criticism," added as a preface to the 1886 edition of *GT* (*KSA* 1, p. 21-22).

Jakob Bachofen.[4] As is well known, *GT* explicitly depicts another Romantic, Nietzsche's then-friend Richard Wagner, as the agent of the rebirth of myth.

Nietzsche later repudiated Wagner and divided his work into three periods: an early period lasting until 1876, in which he remained under the influence of Wagner and Schopenhauer; a middle period (1876-1882) of independence and experimentation; and a final, late period (1882-1889) in which he articulated his positive philosophy.[5] Such a division might indicate that Nietzsche simply abandoned his early Romanticism. However, the book inaugurating his late period, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* (*"Za"*), is a prophetic text that expresses his mature philosophy, particularly his central doctrine of the Eternal Recurrence, in symbols, parables, and riddles. The style of Nietzsche's exposition in *Za* has raised the question of whether he was engaged in mythopoeia. Ernst Behler's statement, "I wanted to show a parallel between the myth-creation of Zarathustra — if one may call it that —

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[4] See, e.g., Barbara von Reibnitz, *Ein Kommentar zu Friedrich Nietzsche, "Die Geburt der Tragödie aus dem Geiste der Musik" (Kap. 1-12)* (Stuttgart: J.B. Metzler, 1992); Max Bäumer, "Das moderne Phänomen des Dionysischen und seine 'Entdeckung' durch Nietzsche, "*Nietzsche-Studien* 6 (1977): 123-53; Ernst Behler, "Nietzsche und die Frühromantische Schule," *Nietzsche-Studien* 7 (1978): 59-87; *idem*, "Die Auffassung des Dionysischen durch die Brüder Schlegel und Friedrich Nietzsche," *Nietzsche-Studien* 12 (1983): 335-54; David Thatcher, "Eagle and Serpent in Zarathustra," *Nietzsche-Studien* 6 (1977): 240-60.

[5] This standard division was accepted by Cristiano Grottanelli in his recent and balanced treatment of the question, "Nietzsche and Myth," *History of Religions* 37 (1997): 3-20. For another articulation of the division, see Eric Voegelin, "Nietzsche and Pascal," *Nietzsche-Studien* 25 (1996): 128-71 at 128. This division follows Nietzsche's note from 1884 entitled "The Way to Wisdom," which describes the three periods without, however, identifying them with any specific chronology (*KSA* 11, 26[47]). Additional support for such a periodization is found on the back of the original edition of *FW*, which announces itself as the conclusion of a series beginning with *MA*, the goal of which series is "to erect *a new image and ideal of the free spirit.*" This page is not included in *KGW*; for a translation, see Kaufmann, *Basic Writings* 30.

and the Romantic search for a new mythology," provoked this strident response from Walter Kaufmann:

> If one takes the term "myth" in a strong sense, then in *Zarathustra* it is certainly not a question of myth. In *Zarathustra* the critical, negative, and in addition the caricaturing and the parodying stand very strongly in the foreground. If one says that one finds the mythical in *Zarathustra*, then one could say just as well and more truly: the entire fourth part of *Zarathustra* is an *anti*myth, in which the myth itself, as far as it deals with one, is made laughable.[6]

The idea that Nietzsche's use of irony and parody are incompatible with (true) myth has led other scholars to suggest similar descriptions of his later philosophy, including "quasi-myth" (*Quasi-Mythos*),[7] "counter-myth" (*Gegen-Mythos*),[8] and, with specific reference to the Eternal Recurrence, "a kind of antimythic myth, a parody of the hopes that Nietzsche's [Romantic] predecessors entertained."[9]

Complicating this debate over Nietzsche's relation to his Romantic predecessors are the philosopher's affirmations of the close relation between *Za* and the earlier, Romantic *GT*. During his discussion of *GT* in *Ecce Homo* ("*EH*"), Nietzsche called himself the "first *tragic philosopher*," then traced his lineage to Heraclitus: "The doctrine of the 'eternal recurrence,' that is, of the unconditional and infinitely repeated circular course of things — this doctrine of Zarathustra *might* in the end have been taught already by Heraclitus" (*KSA* 6, p. 312-13). It is tempting to read this as an anachronism, a mere speaking out of turn. Surely the Eternal Recurrence does not appear before aphorism 341 of *The Gay Science* ("*FW*") (1882), long after *GT*? Yet Nietzsche gave the title "*Incipit tragoedia*" ("tragedy begins") to the very next aphorism of *FW*, which introduces Zarathustra for the first time (*KSA* 3, p. 571). This aphorism concludes the original edition of *FW*, and is

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[6] Discussion following Behler, "Nietzsche und die Frühromantische Schule" 91.

[7] *Id.*

[8] Eugen Biser, "Nietzsche als Mythenzerstörer und Mythenschöpfer," *Nietzsche-Studien* 14 (1985): 96-109 at 105.

[9] Allan Megill, *Prophets of Extremity: Nietzsche, Heidegger, Foucault, Derrida* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985), 19.

followed immediately in the chronological order of Nietzsche's works by *Za*, the preface of which repeats the aphorism's contents. These indications pose once again, and more forcefully, the question raised already by Nietzsche's style of exposition in *Za*: whether that work, and particularly the doctrine of the Eternal Recurrence, might not be an attempt to fulfill the promise of a rebirth of myth made in *GT*.

As I will demonstrate, there is precedent for the symbolism of the Eternal Recurrence in *GT* and in the writings of certain Romantic mythologists, including Bachofen and Creuzer, who influenced Nietzsche during his preparation of that work. In these sources as in *Za*, time or nature is conceived as a cyclical process uniting opposites, and symbolized by various forms of the circle. These symbols are identified with Zarathustra (in Greek, "Zoroaster"), Heraclitus, and Dionysus, prefiguring Nietzsche's later citation of these figures as precedent for his doctrine of the Eternal Recurrence. Identified as a mythological doctrine by his Romantic predecessors, the cycle of opposites, particularly in the form of the ouroborus or serpent biting its own tail, became for Nietzsche a symbol of the unity of myth and philosophy and of the rebirth of the former out of the latter. This suggests that *Za* and the Eternal Recurrence represented a "rebirth of myth" in at least two related senses: as the resurfacing of certain Romantic mythological ideas in Nietzsche's mature philosophy, and as his own attempt at mythopoeia, distinguished by a style of exposition he regarded as appropriate to myth.

The Eternal Recurrence and the Ouroborus in Thus Spoke Zarathustra

Nietzsche, as we have seen, minimally described his central doctrine, the full formula for which is "the Eternal Recurrence of the Same" (*ewige Wiederkunft/Wiederkehr des Gleichen*), as "the unconditional and infinitely repeated circular course of things." The circle is inseparable from the Eternal Recurrence: Zarathustra is both "the teacher of the eternal recurrence" (*KSA* 4, p. 275) and the "advocate

of the circle" (p. 271).[10] Nietzsche's employment of the circle turning back on itself as the primary symbol of the Eternal Recurrence implies not static repetition, but a dynamic cycle uniting opposites, as is explicit in this famous passage from *Za*:

> Upward — defying the spirit that drew it downward toward the abyss, the spirit of gravity, my devil and archenemy. Upward — although he sat on me, half dwarf, half mole, lame, making lame, dripping lead into my ear, leaden thoughts into my brain.
>
> "O Zarathustra," he whispered mockingly, syllable by syllable; "you philosopher's stone [*Stein der Weisheit*]! You threw yourself up high, but every stone that is thrown up must fall... You threw yourself up so high... Sentenced to yourself and to your own stoning — O Zarathustra, far indeed have you thrown the stone, but it will fall back on yourself."
>
> Then the dwarf fell silent...
>
> "Behold this gateway, dwarf!" I continued. "It has two faces. Two paths meet here; no one has yet followed either to its end. This long lane stretches back for an eternity. And the long lane out there, that is another eternity. They contradict each other, these paths; they offend each other face to face; and it is here at this gateway that they come together. The name of the gateway is inscribed above: 'Moment.' But whoever would follow one of them, on and on, farther and farther — do you believe, dwarf, that these paths contradict each other eternally?"
>
> "All that is straight lies," the dwarf murmured contemptuously. "All truth is crooked; time itself is a circle." (p. 198-200)

In this passage, the circle unites the two opposed paths of past and present. This temporal union of opposites is complemented by a more enigmatic union, that between the Spirit of Gravity and Zarathustra. The former pulls downward, while the latter moves upward. The former is "lead" (cf. p. 146), the beginning of the alchemical work, while the latter is the "philosopher's stone," the completion of that work.[11] Zarathustra is strangely intimate with his supposed adversary.

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[10] In the interest of conserving space, the numerous references to *Za* in Part One will henceforth give only the page number in *KSA* 4.

[11] As some authors have previously recognized, Nietzsche employed alchemical symbols to depict his Eternal Recurrence. Thatcher 249; Richard Perkins, "Analogistic Strategies in Zarathustra," in David Goicoechea, ed., *The Great Year of Zarathustra (1881-1981)* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1983), 316-338; and *idem*,

The action with which Zarathustra is simultaneously threatened and accused — crushing with the downward plunge of the stone — mirrors the leaden behavior of the dwarf on his back. The explanation is that Zarathustra and his adversary are, in some sense, identical. The philosopher's stone united the opposites, including both the beginning and the end of the alchemical work. Zarathustra and his adversary/double together form the circle of the Eternal Recurrence.

The Eternal Recurrence is also depicted as the ouroborus, or serpent biting its own tail. Richard Perkins has identified an unmistakable

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"Nietzsche's *opus alchymicum,*" *Seminar* 23 (1987): 216-26. Perkins points out ("Nietzsche's *opus alchymicum*" 216) that "Beginning in 1882, Nietzsche frequently and fairly insistently poses as an inner alchemist, privately in euphoric notebook entries, confidentially in frantic letters to Franz Overbeck, and publicly in *Also sprach Zarathustra*, a frankly chrysopoetic work culminating in a golden nature won through transmutation;" and argues ("Analogistic Strategies" 327) that the alchemical process, symbolized by the ouroborus, or serpent biting its tail, is "the basic conception of *Also sprach Zarathustra*, the meaning moving within all the images, symbols, figures, and metaphors constituting the analogistic demonstration." While this is something of an overstatement, alchemy was certainly one of the sources for Nietzsche's symbolism of the Eternal Recurrence. Apart from the passages pointed out by Perkins and the "philosopher's stone" and "lead" of the passage discussed here, some other unmistakable references to alchemy occur in *Za*: "Out of your poisons, you brewed your balsam [*Balsam*]" (p. 43). The "balsam" or "balsam of life" (*balsamum vitae*) was another name for the alchemical agent as panacea. Cf. p. 289: "If ever I drank full drafts from that foaming spice- and blend-mug in which all things are well-blended; if my hand ever poured the farthest to the nearest, and fire to spirit, and joy to pain, and the most wicked to the most gracious; if I myself am a grain of that redeeming salt which makes all things blend well in the blend-mug — for there is a salt that unites good with evil; and even the greatest evil is worthy of being used as spice for the last foaming over: Oh, how should I not lust after eternity and after the nuptial ring of rings, the ring of recurrence?" The "salt" referred to can only be the alchemical salt, another common name for the agent which effected the *coniunctio*. The topic of Nietzsche's use of alchemical symbolism will not be treated here, with the exception of his use of the ouroborus, a symbol which is not confined to alchemy and which appears directly in Nietzsche's earlier works and also, as shown below, in some of his Romantic predecessors.

reference to the ouroborus as the Eternal Recurrence in Nietzsche's notes from the time of *Za*:

> Do not be afraid of the stream of things: this stream turns back on itself: it runs away from itself not only twice. Every "it was" becomes again an "it is." The past bites everything future in the tail. (November 1882-February 1883, *KSA* 10, 4[85])[12]

At least two other notes refer to a circular serpent named "eternity."[13] In *Za*, the references to the ouroborus are less explicit: "Surrounded by the flame of jealousy, one will in the end, like the scorpion, turn one's poisonous sting against oneself" (p. 43). Zarathustra carries a caduceus, "a staff with a golden handle on which a serpent coiled around the sun" (p. 97). The shepherd with a black serpent in his throat, whom Zarathustra observes shortly after his encounter with his adversary, forms a "dual" or "compound" ouroborus. Zarathustra's command to the shepherd, " 'Bite! Bite its head off! Bite!' ... all that is good and wicked in me cried out of me with a single cry" (p. 201-02), completes the image of the ouroborus, which unites the opposites. The serpent recalls the "black" Spirit of Gravity (p. 49); and Zarathustra later reveals that he himself was the shepherd: "that monster crawled down my throat and suffocated me. But I bit off its head and spewed it out" (p. 273). The image of Zarathustra with his adversary on his back is thus assimilated to the ouroborus, as is the image of Zarathustra's two animals: "And behold! An eagle soared through the sky in wide circles, and on him there hung a serpent, not like prey but like a friend: for she kept herself wound around his neck" (p. 27). The serpent clings to the eagle, its traditional adversary, just as the Spirit of Gravity clings to Zarathustra.

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[12] "Analogistic Strategies" 327.

[13] "Does the serpent called eternity circle itself [*sich ringeln*] already?" (Sommer-Herbst 1882, *KSA* 10, 2[9]); and "The sun of recognition stands once again at noon: and coiled [*geringelt*] lies the serpent of eternity in its light — it is your time, you brothers of afternoon!" (Frühjahr-Herbst 1881, *KSA* 9, 11[196]). Cited in Perkins, "Analogistic Strategies" 336 n. 35, and Thatcher 255.

Also suggestive are various phrases that define "ouroboric" behavior: "Spirit is the life that itself cuts into life" (p. 134). The Spirit of Gravity accuses Zarathustra of such behavior, of being the stone that falls on himself. Zarathustra asserts: "I even strangled the strangler that is called 'sin' " (p. 278). His ouroboric behavior is what distinguishes Zarathustra, the Overman (*Übermensch*), from his opposite: "Alas, the time of the most despicable man is coming, he that is no longer able to despise himself. Behold, I show you the *last man*" (p. 19).

Such verbal formulas depict, through the repetition of a key term, the repetitive and reflexive behavior of the ouroborus or circle. Nietzsche also employed numerous phrases, such as "going under" (*untergehen*) and "Overman" (*Übermensch*), which allude to the shape and movement of the circle. His famous concept of *Selbstüberwindung* (p. 146) is usually translated "self-overcoming." However, the German verb *winden* is cognate with English "to wind" (e.g. a clock); a synonym for *winden* is *schlängeln*, from *Schlange*, "serpent." *Selbstüberwindung* ("self-overwinding") is therefore a precise description of the behavior of the ouroboros.

Romantic Precursors of the Eternal Recurrence

Nietzsche's conception of the Eternal Recurrence as the cycle of time or nature uniting the opposites and represented by various forms of the circle, including the ouroborus, has precedent in certain Romantic mythologists who influenced Nietzsche by the time of *GT*.

Creuzer

Friedrich Creuzer, the founder of "so-called 'Romantic Mythology,' "[14] published in 1810-12 the four volumes of his most important work, *Symbolik und Mythologie der alten Völker, besonders der Griechen* ("Symbolism and Mythology of Ancient Peoples, Especially the Greeks"). The book, a compendium of mythological ideas from different cultures and times, was extremely influential and went through several editions. Nietzsche borrowed the third volume from the Univer-

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[14] Von Reibnitz 62.

sity of Basel library once on June 18, 1871, while still working on *GT*, and again on August 9, 1872.[15] Records of his personal library show that at some later point he acquired the third edition of the *Symbolik*.[16] Creuzer has been identified as one of Nietzsche's sources for the categories "Apollinian and Dionysian" and other symbols.[17] Despite his interest in Creuzer, Nietzsche appears to have mentioned him only once in writing, during his early Basel lectures (1870-71).[18] A perusal of Creuzer's work, however, suggests that his influence on Nietzsche was more than superficial.

The *Symbolik* includes numerous depictions of nature or time as a cycle. Chronos or Father Time, "the god who is withdrawn [*zurück-gezogen*] into himself,"[19] is represented by, among other symbols, the serpent in the form of a circle.[20] In a myth of Zeus, "the life of nature develops itself in the three seasons cyclically returning [*cyk-*

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[15] Martin Vogel, *Appolinisch und Dionysisch* (Regensburg: Gustav Bosse, 1966), 97 confirms the first date. Charles Andler, *Nietzsche: Sa Vie et Sa Pensée* (Paris: Gallimard, 1958), 1: 404 n. 3 has June 8, 1871 and August 9, 1872. However, this is a misprint: Bäumer 142 cites another edition of Andler which has June 18, 1871 for the first date. M. Oehler, "Nietzsches Bibliothek," *Jahresgabe der Gesellschaft der Freunde des Nietzsche-Archivs* 14 (Weimar: 1942), gives the months but not the days for these loans; it also lists much of the contents of Nietzsche's personal library. None of these sources indicates which edition Nietzsche borrowed. Prof. Dr. Martin Steinmann of the University of Basel Library has graciously informed me that it was the second edition, 1819-23. Citations to the *Symbolik* here are instead to the third edition, which is the one Nietzsche later possessed in his library.

[16] Andler 1: 404 n. 3; Oehler 10.

[17] Bäumer 139; Behler, "Nietzsche und die Frühromantische Schule," 73; Karlfried Gründer, Discussion following Peter Heller, "Nietzsches Kampf mit dem romantischen Pessimismus," *Nietzsche-Studien* 7 (1978): 51; Thatcher, *passim*. See Creuzer 4: 116ff.

[18] Vorlesungen 1870-71, *KGW* II.3, p. 410.

[19] Friedrich Creuzer, *Symbolik und Mythologie der alten Völker, besonders der Griechen*, 3. Verbesserte Ausgabe, 4 Bd. (Leipzig und Darmstadt, Carl Wilhelm Leske, 1837-42), 3: 58. All references are to this edition.

[20] *Id.* 3: 59; cf. 4: 79.

lisch wiederkehrenden]."[21] There are numerous references to the cycle of reincarnation or metempsychosis of the Pythagoreans and Orphics (*Kreislauf/Rückkehr der Seele*),[22] and to the analogous Indian doctrine,[23] which Creuzer occasionally confuses with the Greek. The phoenix is "the bird of the great year or the rebirth of the new time in determinate cycles."[24] The cycle of time is connected with Heracles[25] and other gods, but especially with Dionysus[26] and Dionysus Zagreus.[27] One passage in particular resembles the Eternal Recurrence, especially in its depictions as a compound ouroborus:

> Cicero mentioned a Bacchus... who killed Nysa. Nysa... is the *reversal* [*Umschwung*] *at the end of time*. Therefore this Dionysus is the *sun, which swallows* [*verschlingt*], *takes in, disposes of* [*abthut*] *the circle of time in itself*, as Saturn devours [*verzehrt*] his own children; and the same is also the Libyan Dionysus, who kills the *Kampe* (the cycle of time)... [28] (emphasis original)

In a footnote to this passage, Creuzer connects this "revolution of times and things [*Umkreis der Zeiten und Dinge*]", and especially the aforementioned Kampe as the "point of return [*Umkehr*] on the course of the sun," with the movement of the chariots around the Roman circus, in which the turning-points were marked by two pillars (*Umlenkungssäule*).[29]

Apart from these precedents for the symbolism of the Eternal Recurrence, Creuzer's description of Magianism closely resembles Nietzsche's:

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[21] *Id.* 1: 25.

[22] *Id.* 1: 138, 3: 777.

[23] *Id.* 1: 434-36, 445.

[24] *Id.* 2: 165; cf. 163ff. Nietzsche employed the symbol of the phoenix in *Za* I, "On the Way of the Creator" (*KSA* 4, p. 82).

[25] *Id.* 2: 657ff.; 630-31.

[26] *Id.* 2: 658; 4: 125, 131, 134ff.

[27] *Id.* 4: 96ff.

[28] *Id.* 4: 23.

[29] *Id.* 4: 24 n. 1.

> [T]he Magians conceived the problem of the world... through the opposition of light and darkness, of good and evil... Hence the fundamental teaching of the Magians: All things subsist in the mixture of opposites... In these theories of Magianism we truly have a source of the famous doctrines of Heraclitus... and of the system of Empedocles... [30]

> According to [higher Magianism], enmity is the foundation of finite things... Without the intention of the creator, the antithesis follows the thesis, that is, the darkness follows the light, like the shadow the person. Heraclitus made the same thing the main thesis of his system... And furthermore, he understood the opposites precisely so, as for example rising, falling, day, night... He proceeded, like the Persians, from contradiction as the foundation of things. The unity itself, called world, subsists through differentiation... In this turning [*Kehre*] of the contraries, balanced through unity, the insight steps forward, that death itself must exist, as Heraclitus shows from many sides.[31]

Several of the features of Creuzer's Magianism foreshadow the Eternal Recurrence, especially the symbol of the shadow, which resembles the dark dwarf on Zarathustra's back, and the use of spatial metaphors to describe the opposites. More significant is Creuzer's association of Magianism with the idea of a cycle uniting opposites,[32] and with Heraclitus.[33] The first association, which enables the second, is actually an inversion of the rigid ethical dualism of Zoroastrianism, in which, unlike in Heraclitus, there was no positive valorization of contradiction. As Günter Wohlfart noted, Creuzer's association of Heraclitus with Zoroaster sparked vigorous debate.[34] Wohlfart concluded that Nietzsche, knowing the Pre-Socratic's teaching to be in fact opposed to Magian dualism, sided against Creuzer: "Nietzsche's Heraclitus is an Anti-Zoroaster."[35] However, as Wohlfart acknowledged, Nietzsche's Zarathustra is also an "Anti-Zoroaster." Nietzsche chose

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[30] *Id.* 1: 199.

[31] *Id.* 2: 595-96.

[32] Creuzer also associated the Magian god Zeruane Akherene with Chronos and the idea of a "great year" or eternal cycle of time. *Id.* 1: 195; 3: 169ff.

[33] Cf. *Id.* 1: 293; 2: 595-96.

[34] Günter Wohlfart, *"Also sprach Herakleitos: Heraklits Fragment B 52 und Nietzsches Heraklit-Rezeption* (Freiburg: Karl Alber, 1991), 314-16.

[35] *Id.* 316.

Zarathustra as the exponent of the Eternal Recurrence precisely because of the historical figure's doctrine that good and evil are eternally separate: "Zarathustra was the first to consider the fight of good and evil the very wheel in the machinery of things ... Zarathustra created this calamitous error, morality; consequently, he must also be the first to recognize it" (*EH*, "Why I Am a Destiny," *KSA* 6, p. 367).[36] By contrast, Nietzsche's reformed Zarathustra teaches the Eternal Recurrence as the union of opposites: "In every word he contradicts, this most Yes-saying of all spirits; in him all opposites are blended into a new unity" (*EH*, "Thus Spoke Zarathustra," *KSA* 6, p. 343). This association of Zarathustra both with a positive valorization of contradiction and with Heraclitus closely resembles Creuzer's account of Magianism, which it seems Nietzsche may have appropriated and modified, if not actually accepted.[37]

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[36] Zarathustra's past sins identify him once again with his nemesis, the Spirit of Gravity, who is elsewhere held responsible for creating good and evil (*Za* III, "On Old and New Tablets," *KSA* 4, p. 248).

[37] Furthermore, in the early *Philosophy in the Tragic Age of the Greeks*, Nietzsche did not reject the possible connection of Zoroaster and Heraclitus:

"It has been pointed out assiduously, to be sure, how much the Greeks were able to find and learn abroad in the Orient, and it is doubtless true that they picked up much there. It is a strange spectacle, however, to see the alleged teachers from the Orient and their Greek disciples exhibited side by side: *Zoroaster next to Heraclitus*, Hindus next to Eleatics ... As to the general idea, we should not mind it, if only its exponents did not burden us with their conclusion that philosophy was thus merely imported into Greece rather than having grown and developed there in a soil natural and native to it ... Nothing would be sillier than to claim an autochthonous development for the Greeks. On the contrary, they invariably absorbed other living cultures ... [W]hat they invented was *the archetypes of philosophic thought*." (*PHG* 1, *KSA* 1, p. 806-07) (first emphasis mine)

Thus, Nietzsche accepted that the Greek philosophers may have appropriated and developed Oriental ideas; and, by implication, that Heraclitus may have borrowed something from Zoroaster. As von Reibnitz notes (97, esp. n. 27), Nietzsche in *GT* also accepted the thesis, advanced by Creuzer among others, of an Oriental origin for the Dionysus cult.

Bachofen

Johann Jakob Bachofen, the lawyer-*cum*-mythologist and author of
a groundbreaking treatise on primitive matriarchy, was a Basel resident
and older colleague and friend of Nietzsche.[38] In his first years at
Basel, Nietzsche was frequently a guest at the Bachofen residence.[39]
Nietzsche borrowed Bachofen's *Versuch über die Gräbersymbolik
der Alten* (1859) ("Investigation into the Mortuary Symbolism of the
Ancients") from the University of Basel library on June 18, 1871 (the
very day he borrowed Creuzer's *Symbolik*), at the time of composing
GT.[40] Bachofen is said to have approved of *GT* in turn.[41]

In his *Gräbersymbolik*, Bachofen argued that the mortuary symbol-
ism of the ancient Greeks and Romans expressed the idea that nature
consists of a continual struggle of two antagonistic principles (identi-
fied as good and evil, day and night, life and death, etc.), which consti-
tute two opposed poles united by a cyclical process:

> On monuments of indubitable meaning the circle appears as a sign of apotheosis.
> It derives this symbolic use from the peculiarity of the circular line, which, like
> all the life of tellurian creation, returns [*zurückkehrt*] ever again on itself and in
> the progression from the starting point. It thus encloses, like the egg, both poles,
> between which creation eternally moves to and fro, and which, like white and
> black, merge into one another... In this manner, ball, disc, and circle obtain a
> definite association with the physical bearers of nature's power... All of these
> associations of the circle and its different representations have concurrently truth
> and justification. The original association, however, to which the remaining ones
> and, finally, the meaning of the mysteries connect, is none other than that eternal
> return [*ewige Zurückkehren*] of creation to itself that comes to view in the circular

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[38] See George Boas' preface to Ralph Manheim, trans., *Myth, Religion, and Mother
Right: Selected Writings of J.J. Bachofen*, Bollingen Series 84 (Princeton: Princeton
University Press, 1967), xxff.

[39] Andler 1: 419.

[40] *Id.* 419 n. 2.

[41] Bäumer 153.

line, that repose of end and beginning in each other... In this manner, the circle becomes an expression of fate or of the highest law of nature, ruling all life.[42]

Like Creuzer before him, Bachofen associated this cycle of opposites with the course of the chariots at the Roman circus:

> In the departure of movement the team returns ever again to its starting point, like the circular line, of which the completion loses itself in the beginning. One of the powers drives straight ahead, while the other turns round and leads back again. The completion of each existence is a return [*Rückkehr*] to its beginning, and in each distancing from the starting point there lies at the same time a re-approaching [*Wiederannäherung*] to the same. Two directions are in just such an unexplainable way joined to each other, like the two powers themselves, for they correspond. The result of their combined power is the cycle, in which all tellurian life eternally moves. The image of this cycle is the revolutions of the chariots, which fly around the *metae* with the highest speed, in order to return [*zurückkehren*] to the starting point and then to traverse the same space again anew.[43]

Bachofen's idea of an eternal return (*ewige Zurückkehr*) to the same point through the cycle of opposites closely resembles the Eternal Recurrence (*ewige Wiederkunft/Wiederkehr*). Bachofen associated his eternal return with a number of symbols later associated with the Eternal Recurrence, including the caduceus,[44] the phoenix,[45] and the serpent, which "has a long life, turns back [*zurückkehrt*] from an old one into a youth and gains new and greater powers, until she is resolved [*aufgelöst*] into herself again after the completion of a set span... [S]he is immortal and turns back on herself."[46] Several of Bachofen's depictions of the two opposed powers closely prefigure the image of Zarathustra with the dark dwarf weighing on his back:

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[42] Johann Jakob Bachofen, *Johann Jakob Bachofens Gesammelte Werke*, ed. Karl Meuli, vol. 4, *Versuch über die Gräbersymbolik der Alten* (Basel: Benno Schwabe & Co., 1954), 151-53.

[43] *Id.* 270.

[44] *Id.* 168.

[45] The phoenix is connected with "the idea of a great cosmic year and of time ever returning [*zurückkehrend*] in fixed periods to self-rejuvenation." *Id.* 134.

[46] *Id.* 175 n. 3 (quoting Philo); cf. 175ff.

the two powers pulling in opposite directions at the chariot race; the *dioscuri*, mythical twins of dark and light;[47] Dionysus Melanaigis, who wears a black goatskin and appears behind his victim;[48] and Ocnus, the penitent in Hades who weaves a rope that is continually devoured by an ass.[49] These symbols are precedent for the atypical compound form of the ouroborus found in *Za*. For Bachofen as for Nietzsche, all of these symbols are encompassed within and expressed by the one master symbol of the circle.

Bachofen identified his eternal return as "the foundation of all ancient religion,"[50] including that of Heraclitus[51] and, especially, Dionysus: "This eternal return [*stete Rückkehr*] of the sundered potencies to the original unity, as it was in the egg, forms the innermost content of the Dionysian religion and its mysteries."[52] The Dionysian religion contained, in purer form, the essence of all other religions.[53] Bachofen, therefore, appears to be a likely source for some of the specific symbols, terminology, and concepts of Nietzsche's Eternal Recurrence, as well as for the association of these with Dionysus.

Schelling

Friedrich Schelling's *Weltalter*[54] ("Ages of the World"), another important work of Romantic mythology, contains the following passage:

> [P]rimal nature is a life eternally revolving in itself, a kind of circle... Of course the distinction between lower and higher is continually annulled in this continual circular movement; there is neither a truly higher nor a truly lower, because alternately the one is higher and the other lower; there is only an incessant wheel,

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[47] *Id.* 14ff., 23ff., 269.

[48] *Id.* 59 (citing Creuzer, *Symbolik*, 3. Ausgabe, 4: 152), 355, 435.

[49] *Id.* 352-485.

[50] *Id.* 27, 30.

[51] *Id.* 28, 269, 431, 437, 463.

[52] *Id.* 39.

[53] *Id.* 56.

[54] This work was begun in 1811, but published only after Schelling's death in 1854. See Frederick de Wolfe Bolman, Jr., trans., Friedrich Schelling, *The Ages of the World*, reprint ed. (New York: AMS Press, 1967), 5.

a never resting, rotating movement in which there is no distinction. Even the concept of beginning and end is again annulled in this rotation... These are the powers of that inner life incessantly giving birth to and consuming itself again, which man not without fear divines as what is hidden in everything, although it is now covered up and has outwardly assumed stable properties. By that continual return to the beginning and the eternal recommencing [*das ewige Wiederbeginnen*], that life makes itself substance in the real sense of the word (*id quod substat*), into the always abiding; it is the constant inner mainspring and clockwork, it is *time which is eternally beginning, eternally becoming, always devouring itself and always giving birth to itself again. The antithesis eternally begets itself in order to be consumed again and again by the unity, and the antithesis is eternally consumed by the unity in order to revive itself ever anew.* This is the center, the hearth of the life which is continually perishing in its own flames and rejuvenating itself from the ash. This is the undying fire, by the smothering of which, as Heraclitus asserted, the universe was created, and which was shown to one of the prophets in a vision, as something returning upon itself, ever repeating itself by retrogression and again going forward. This is the object of the ancient Magian wisdom, and of that fire doctrine in accordance with which the Jewish lawgiver also left his people this saying: "The Lord, your God, is a consuming fire"... [55] (emphasis mine)

Although there is no direct evidence that Nietzsche read *Weltalter*, he did refer to Schelling in connection with Creuzer once during his Basel lectures.[56] Schelling's circle of "eternal recommencing" (*ewiges Wiederbeginnen*) strikingly parallels the Eternal Recurrence (*ewige Wiederkunft/Wiederkehr*). His symbolism of the cycle of "time... always devouring itself and always giving birth to itself again... continually perishing in its own flames and rejuvenating itself from the ash" evokes the ouroborus and phoenix[57] that symbolize the Eternal Recurrence. Perhaps most significant is Schelling's association of the eternal cycle of opposites with both Heraclitus and the "ancient Magian wisdom" (i.e. Zoroaster), an association we encountered also in Bachofen and especially Creuzer.

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[55] *Id.* 116-17. I have supplied the German from *Schellings Werke*, ed. Manfred Schröter, series I, vol. 4 (München: C.H. Beck, 1958), 606.

[56] Vorlesungen 1870-71, *KGW* II.3, p. 410.

[57] *KSA* 4, p. 82.

The Rebirth of Myth?

For several of Nietzsche's Romantic predecessors, the eternal cycle of opposites was a specifically mythic idea, the distilled wisdom of ancient peoples. They placed the highest value not only on the content of this mythic doctrine, but also on the symbolic form of its expression, as Bachofen explains:

> The alternation of light and dark color expresses the continuous passage from darkness to light, from death to life. It shows us tellurian creation as the result of eternal becoming and eternal passing away, as a never-ending movement between two opposite poles. This idea deserves our fullest attention because of its inner truth, but we must also admire the simple expression of the symbol. The mere opposition of light and dark color concretizes a profound thought which the greatest of ancient philosophers seemed unable to express fully in words... The sublime dignity and richness of the symbol reside precisely in the fact that it not only allows of but even encourages different levels of interpretation, and leads us from the truths of physical life to those of a higher spiritual order.[58]

Creuzer concurred in the conviction that myth was a form of thought superior to philosophy: "What then is more impressive than the image [*Bild*]? The truth of a wholesome teaching, which would be lost on the wide path of the concept, meets its goal immediately in the image."[59] Or, "[W]hat we call symbolic [*Bildliches*] ... [is] nothing other than the stamp of our thought, a necessity, from which even the most abstract and prosaic [*nüchternste*] spirit cannot extract itself..."[60]

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[58] Bachofen 18ff. (trans. Mannheim); cf. Bachofen 61-63 (trans. Mannheim): "Myth is the exegesis of the symbol. It unfolds in a series of outwardly connected actions what the symbol embodies in a unity. It resembles a discursive philosophical treatise in so far as it splits the idea into a number of connected images and then leaves it to the reader to draw the ultimate inference... To expound the mystery doctrine in words would be a sacrilege against the supreme law; it can only be represented in terms of myth... Human language is too feeble to convey all the thoughts aroused by the alternation of life and death and the sublime hopes of the initiate. Only the symbol and the related myth can meet this higher need."

[59] Creuzer 4: 483. Here he also cited Pausanias' observation that the wisest Greeks spoke in riddles.

[60] *Id.* 4: 527.

At the same time, as this last statement of Creuzer's suggests, philosophy appropriated the originally mythic idea of the cycle of opposites[61], and even continued, in increasingly abstract form, the symbolic manner of its expression. This development was represented metonymically in the relationship of Zoroaster the myth-maker with Heraclitus the philosopher:

> Heraclitus the Ephesian, in order to represent the principal of his philosophy, the dogma of opposition as the foundation of all things, of cosmic harmony through dissonance, of light and darkness, death and life... chose precisely the bow and lyre for his chiaroscuro pictures [*helldunkele Bilder*]. He had taken the content of his teachings from the light-theories of the Orient; from there he took his images as well... These propositions of ancient Magian teaching... these symbols of the ancient light- and fire-temples of the Near East, these myths and festival hymns... the profound philosopher from Ephesus impressed with his sharp, deep spirit, and expanded them into a system of philosophemes [*Philosophemen*]: not dialectical — this was reserved for Plato later — but rather priestly, suggestive, and in the character of the Delphic king who, as Heraclitus himself said, "says nothing, hides nothing, but hints instead." Whether this Heraclitus wrote one [of the books attributed to] Zoroaster, as later testimony would have it, or not, remains quite indifferent. It is enough that he philosophized Zoroastrically, that he taught like the ancient great teacher of light Zerethoschtro, the Star of Gold.[62]

While claiming that philosophy developed out of myth, Creuzer at times, in keeping with his valuation of myth, characterized this development as a decline brought about in part through the agency of philosophy, which contributed to the distinction of myth as "false" speech.[63] There was subsequently in the Alexandrian period a return of myth:

> The return [*Rückkehr*] and reestablishment of [both] mysticism and symbolism in mythology, and the total and permanent predominance of both... The thou-

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[61] "Plato and the Platonists, for example, expressed the activity of the spirit and its relation to itself through the circular movement, compared the spirit to a circle, and sensuality to a straight line, spoke of a revolving [*Umlauf*] of the spirit, said that the spirit moves in a circle..." *Id.* 1: 43, n. 1. On Plato's use of other myths, see 4: 563-64.

[62] *Id.* 2: 599-601.

[63] *Id.* 4: 520ff., 663.

sandfold stimulated, enriched, and striving human spirit is pointed back on itself [*auf sich selbst hingewiesen*], and observation returns [*kehrt zurück*] within.[64]

Several strands of this Romantic view of mythology seem to have been taken up by Nietzsche in *GT*, in which the eternal cycle of opposites appears as the mythical doctrine *par excellence* and, more particularly, a symbol of the unity of the opposites myth and philosophy, and of the rebirth of the former out of the latter. Nietzsche in that work placed the highest possible valuation on myth[65], which he identified with music, poetry, and tragedy, among other things. Myth took the form of symbol, image, and metaphor:[66] thus "the capacity of music to give birth to *myth*... and particularly the *tragic* myth... which expresses Dionysian knowledge in symbols [or "metaphors:" *Gleichnissen*]" (*GT* 16, *KSA* 1, p. 107). Such illusion-creating forms of expression were superior to the "truths" or "concepts" of the philosopher or scientist. Only one year later, in the essay "On Truth and Lying in an Extra-Moral Sense," he argued:

> What is truth? A mobile army of metaphors, metonyms, anthropomorphisms, in short, a sum of human relations which were poetically and rhetorically heightened, transferred, and adorned, and after long use seem solid, canonical, and binding to a nation. Truths are illusions about which it has been forgotten that they are illusions, worn-out metaphors without sensory impact... (*KSA* 1, p. 880-81[67]).

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[64] *Id.* 4: 666.

[65] See *GT* 23, *KSA* 1, p. 145: "[W]ithout myth every culture loses the natural healthy power of its creativity: only a horizon defined by myths completes and unifies a whole cultural movement... Even the state knows no more powerful unwritten laws than the mythical foundation that guarantees its connection with religion and its growth from mythical notions."

[66] In *GT*, Nietzsche employs all of these terms (*Symbol, Bild, Metapher*) without any clear distinction in meaning. While a detailed study of Nietzsche's use of these terms, and any distinctions in meaning among them, would be necessary for a full understanding of Nietzsche's *Sprachlehre*, for our purposes we may take all of these terms as roughly equivalent.

[67] Translated in Sander Gilman, Carole Blair, and David Parent, eds, *Friedrich Nietzsche on Rhetoric and Language* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), 246-57 at 250.

GT is an explicit riposte to Plato's distinction between philosophy and poetry (or myth), and devaluation of the latter. Nietzsche simultaneously abolished and inverted Plato's hierarchy: even philosophy is a form of myth, albeit a debased form. Nietzsche's valuation of myth is thus encompassed within a radical monism in which "it is only as an *aesthetic phenomenon* that existence and the world are eternally *justified*" (*GT* 5, *KSA* 1, p. 47). This idea, which is rightfully regarded as one of Nietzsche's most radical doctrines, echoes some of Creuzer's contentions concerning the superiority and inevitability of the image (*Bild*) as a basis for thought.

For Nietzsche, this unity of myth and philosophy was not static, but dynamic and cyclical. The death of myth could be traced back to Socrates and Euripides; the rebirth of myth would occur through the agency of Wagner, and would represent, at the same time, the self-overcoming of philosophy. This rebirth is symbolized by the circle in several passages,[68] most notably in Section 15, the original end of the book:

> [S]cience, spurred by its powerful illusion, speeds irresistibly toward its limits where its optimism, concealed in the essence of logic, suffers shipwreck. For the periphery of the circle of science has an infinite number of points; and while there is no telling how this circle could ever be surveyed completely, noble and gifted men nevertheless reach, e'er half their time and inevitably, such boundary points on the periphery from which one gazes into what defies illumination. When they see to their horror how *logic coils up at these boundaries and finally bites its own tail* — suddenly the new form of insight breaks through, *tragic insight* which, merely to be endured, needs art as a protection and remedy...
>
> Here we knock, deeply moved, at the gates of present and future: will this "turning" ["*Umschlagen*"] lead to ever-new configurations of genius and

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[68] "... the profound poet wants to tell us: though every law, every natural order, even the moral world may perish through his actions, his actions also produce a higher magical circle of effects which found a new world on the ruins of the old one that has been overthrown" (*GT* 9, *KSA* 1, p. 65); "... amid all our culture [German music] is really the only genuine, pure, and purifying fire-spirit from which and toward which, as in the teaching of the great Heraclitus of Ephesus, all things move in a double orbit" (*GT* 19, *KSA* 1, p. 128).

especially of the *Socrates who practices music*? (*GT* 15, *KSA* 1, p. 101-02) (first emphasis mine)

The rebirth of tragedy through the self-overcoming of philosophy is depicted as the ouroborus, a symbol also hinted in the phrase "the edge of wisdom turns against the wise" (*GT* 9, *KSA* 1, p. 67), and prefigured in a note from late 1870: "The highest sign of the will: the belief in illusion and theoretical pessimism bites itself in the tail" (*KSA* 7, 5[68]). Nietzsche's depiction of the self-overcoming of philosophy as a " 'turning' ['*Kehre*'] ... at the gates of present and future" foreshadows the famous encounter of Zarathustra with the Spirit of Gravity, when the paths of past and future meet at a gateway inscribed "Moment."

The rebirth of tragedy is associated with both Heraclitus[69] and Dionysus, especially the myth of Dionysus Zagreus' dismemberment and later reunification and rebirth, which Nietzsche calls the "mystery doctrine of tragedy" (*GT* 10, *KSA* 1, p. 73). In *Za*, he alludes to this myth in connection with the Eternal Recurrence: "What returns, what finally comes home to me, is my own self and what of myself has long been in strange lands and scattered among all things and accidents" (*KSA* 4, p. 193); and:

> Verily, my friends, I walk among men as among the fragments and limbs of men. This is what is terrible for my eyes, that I find man in ruins and scattered as over a battlefield or a butcher-field... And this is all my creating and striving, that I create and carry together into One what is fragment and riddle and dreadful accident. (p. 178-79; cf. p. 248)

These associations lend substance to Nietzsche's later affirmations of the close relation between *GT* and *Za*, tragedy and the Eternal Recurrence. Do we then conclude that Nietzsche developed the doctrine of the Eternal Recurrence long before its explicit arrival in *FW* 341? This characterization would be as unjustified as the opposite conclusion now appears: that there is no precedent for the Eternal Recurrence in Nietzsche's earlier works, that it sprang, Athena-like, fully-formed from his brain in an instant, without relation to existing currents in his

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[69] See preceding note.

thought. If Nietzsche's roots in Romanticism extended deeper than had previously been observed, it is also the case that those roots nourished the furthest leaves and branches of his philosophy.

What are we to make of such a resurfacing of Romantic ideas in Nietzsche's mature philosophy, in his most important book *Za* and central doctrine of the Eternal Recurrence? It is tempting to conclude that the Eternal Recurrence, which Nietzsche introduced with the words "tragedy begins," represented the rebirth of myth predicted in *GT*. However, such a simplistic conclusion is complicated and, potentially, contradicted by the critical, ironic, and parodying elements in his mature philosophy, which some have therefore labeled "antimythic." Cristiano Grottanelli has framed the problem well:

> The paradoxical quality of Nietzsche's use of mythical names and images during his third period lies in the fact that the German philosopher used such names and symbols to indicate his stance that denied the possibility of reaching a philosophical or religious truth, attacked and reversed accepted values, and affirmed Life, the Will to Power, and the Eternal Return as guidelines implying the refusal of all ethical, religious, and philosophical categories. This is the opposite of the Romantic idea of a profound religious truth embodied in nature, intuited by the *Volk* and expressed in symbol and myth.[70]

Grottanelli wisely suggests that we avoid the extremes of suggesting that Nietzsche's mature philosophy represented either a straightforward return to myth, or a complete rejection of myth. He relies on Nietzsche's division of his own philosophy into three periods (described above), in which the early Romantic period is separated from the mature period by a middle period in which the philosopher expressed his greatest scientism and skepticism. Such a division precludes a simple continuity of Nietzsche's Romanticism.

While endorsing this interpretation in broad outline, I would hasten to point out that Nietzsche employed the eternal cycle of opposites, which was for him originally a mythic idea, as a symbol for the philosophical project of his skeptical middle period inaugurated by *Human, All Too Human* ("*MA*"). In the preface to the 1886 edition, Nietzsche

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[70] Grottanelli 18.

described that book as a "great separation," in which he turned on his earlier thought: "He tears apart what attracts him" (*Er zerreisst, was ihn reizt*) (*MA* Vorrede 3, *KSA* 2, p. 17). This ouroboric behavior is further specified: "Loneliness surrounds [*umringt*] him, curls round [*umringelt*] him, ever more threatening, strangling, heart-constricting, that fearful goddess and *mater saeva cupidinum*." Through the repetition of homonyms and an allusion to the ouroborus, Nietzsche placed *MA* within the cycle of opposites. This suggests that, if Nietzsche in *MA* separated himself from and destroyed his earlier attachment to myth, he was to rejoin and recreate myth later, in *Za*.

Such an interpretation may, of course, be dismissed as mere hindsight. However, Nietzsche's division of his philosophy into three periods is also hindsight. And there are indications that Nietzsche may have had a "return to myth" in mind, a sort of hidden agenda, at the time of writing *MA*. In the very first aphorism of that work, he rejected the absolute distinction between opposites, argued that we need a "*chemistry* of moral, religious, aesthetic ideas and feelings," and asked: "What if this chemistry might end with the conclusion that, even here, the most glorious colors are extracted from base, even despised [*verachteten*] substances?" (*MA* 1, *KSA* 2, p. 23-24). Although Nietzsche appears to take a scientific turn by terming the new art "chemistry," his description sounds much closer to the alchemical work, in which opposites are reconciled, and lead (or other base substances) turned into gleaming gold. This is confirmed by several passages in his notes and letters, which reveal his concept of alchemy as the art of producing gold out of precisely the most "despised" (*verachteten*) substances, even out of excrement.[71]

Also in Part One of *MA*, Nietzsche argued that it is necessary to move beyond a merely negative assessment of metaphysics and

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[71] Letter to Georg Brandes, May 23, 1888, *KGB* III.5, p. 318-19; letter to Franz Overbeck, December 25, 1882, *KGB* III.1, p. 312 ("If I don't discover the alchemist's art, to make gold even out of this — dung, then I am lost."); *KGW* VII.1, 7[155], p. 301; and *KGW* VII.3, 16[43], p. 297; all cited in Perkins, "Analogistic Strategies", p. 325-26; and "Nietzsche's *opus alchymicum*", p. 218-19.

religion to a positive appreciation of their value. He described this as a *"retrograde movement"* [*rückläufige Bewegung*] (*MA* 20, *KSA* 2, p. 41):

> He must recognize how mankind's greatest advancement came from [metaphysical ideas] and how, if one did not take this retrograde step, one would rob himself of mankind's finest accomplishments to date... Those who are most enlightened can go only as far as to free themselves of metaphysics and look back on it with superiority, while here, as in the hippodrome, it is necessary to take a turn at the end of the track. (*MA* 20, *KSA* 2, p. 41-42)

The movement reintegrating what is positive in metaphysics and religion, after first completely rejecting them, follows the pattern of the Eternal Recurrence. Nietzsche may have taken the specific symbol of the retrograde movement of the chariot from Creuzer or especially Bachofen, for whom, as we have seen, it certainly represented the union of opposites. Nietzsche thus employed the cycle of opposites to symbolize not merely the content of his philosophy, but also the form of his own development as a philosopher.

Moreover, it is essential to keep in mind that, in many passages in which Nietzsche appears to attack myth, including the one from *MA* just quoted, he is actually attacking the "faith in opposite values" (*JGB* 2, *KSA* 5, p. 16) which he associated variously with philosophy, metaphysics, and religion, especially Christianity, as well as, in some cases, with myth. Nietzsche's usage of the term "myth" does not remain consistent. What does remain consistent, from *GT* onward throughout his career, is his rejection of the idea that there could be any absolute opposites, and his use of the circle to symbolize this rejection. These features, even when separated from the category of "myth," continue to mark Nietzsche's philosophy as originating in Romantic ideas of myth.

Nietzsche's mature philosophy certainly contains critical, ironic, and parodying elements that might justly be described as "antimythic." However, these elements harmonize with, rather than contradict, the idea of the cycle of opposites. A brief analysis shows that the most nihilistic idea of the late period, the "Revaluation of All Values" (*Umwertung aller Werte*), constitutes a form of this cycle. As we

have seen, Nietzsche employed verbal formulas which depict the Eternal Recurrence through the repetition of a key term. In the same way, the formula "Revaluation of All Values," through a play on the word "value" (*Wert*), encodes the repetition and reflexivity that are identifying markers of the circle. The phrase carries even richer nuances in the German because of the prefix "*um-*", which signifies "around," "about," or, more generally, "inversion."

If the content of Nietzsche's philosophy remained remarkably consistent, it may be suggested that the more distinctive feature of his mature philosophy is that, whereas in *GT* he had only predicted the rebirth of myth, and looked to Wagner for the fulfillment of this prediction, in *Za*, where "tragedy begins," Nietzsche called on his own poetic agency in an attempt to create a new myth.[72] He later criticized *GT* on precisely these grounds: "It should have sung, this 'new soul' — and not spoken! What I had to say then — too bad that I did not dare say it as a poet: perhaps I had the ability" (*GT*, "Attempt at a Self-Criticism," *KSA* 1, p. 15). For the "genuine poet" described in *GT*, "metaphor is not a rhetorical figure but a vicarious image that he actually beholds in place of a concept" (*GT* 8, *KSA* 1, p. 60). The consequence of Nietzsche's argument that "the *tragic* myth ... expresses Dionysian knowledge in symbols" (*GT* 16, *KSA* 1, p. 107) is that Nietzsche himself, the prophet of Dionysus, must employ symbols to express the tragic idea *par excellence*, the Eternal Recurrence. In this way, he tried to accomplish in his own later work the reconciliation of poetry and philosophy, and to become himself the "Socrates who practices music" (*GT* 15, *KSA* 1, p. 101-02; cf. *GT* 17, *KSA* 1, p. 111).

In the essay on *GT* in *EH*, Nietzsche refers to his early *Wagner in Bayreuth* (1876):

> [I]n all psychologically decisive places ... one need not hesitate to put down my name or the word "Zarathustra" where the text has the word "Wagner." The entire picture of the dithyrambic artist is a picture of the pre-existent poet

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[72] Cf. Megill 81: "The motif of a 'return to myth' ... persists, with Nietzsche-Zarathustra playing the remythifying role that in the early writings is played by Wagner."

of *Zarathustra*, sketched with abysmal profundity and without touching even for a moment the Wagnerian reality... At the beginning of section 9 the *style* of *Zarathustra* is described with incisive certainty and anticipated... (*KSA* 6, p. 314)

The section in question claims that Wagner "thinks in visible and sensible processes [*Vorgängen*], not in concepts, which is to say, that he thinks mythically, as the people [*Volk*] have always thought. At the foundation of myth lies, not a thought, as the children of an unaesthetic [*verkünstelten*] culture suppose, but rather [myth] itself is a thinking [*Denken*]..." (*KSA* I, p. 485)[73] Substituting "Zarathustra" for "Wagner," we learn that the style of Zarathustra is none other than the mythic.

Both the content and the form of expression of Nietzsche's Eternal Recurrence borrowed from the Romantic mythological idea of the cycle of opposites. Although Nietzsche explicitly rejected his Romantic roots, this does not seem to have kept him from developing this idea into the central doctrine of his mature philosophy. The transmutation of a Romantic mythological doctrine, almost in spite of itself, suits the onward progression of the cycle of opposites. It matters little whether we label the Eternal Recurrence "myth" or "antimyth." A more fitting description of Nietzsche's project than either of these terms is Creuzer's notion of a Heraclitus who "philosophizes Zoroastrically," using symbols of the contraries.[74] Without concluding that the Eternal Recurrence represented a simple rebirth of myth, we can now recognize how and why Nietzsche claimed that, with this, "tragedy begins:" it is a symbol for his mature philosophy as the apotheosis of his earlier, Romantic self.

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[73] Cf. Nietzsche's later comments on the style of Zarathustra in *EH*, *KSA* 6, p. 340, 344.

[74] When Nietzsche came across the (false) etymology of Zarathustra as "Star of Gold," which appears in the same passage from Creuzer as the phrase just given, but also in other sources, he claimed to discover in it "the entire conception of his work." Thatcher 248 n. 28.

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BOOK REVIEWS

DAVID R. JORDAN, HUGO MONTGOMERY and EINAR THOMASSEN (Eds),
The World of Ancient Magic. Papers from the first International Samson
Eitrem Seminar at the Norwegian Institute at Athens, 4-8 May 1997
(Papers from the Norwegian Institute at Athens, 4) — Bergen: Paul
Åströms Förlag (distributor) 1999 (335 p.) ISBN 82-91626-15-4 (pbk.).

Samson Eitrem was one of the leading experts of ancient magic and
divination in the 20th century. To mark his 125th birthday, scholars from
different disciplines gathered at the Norwegian Institute at Athens "to provide
a forum for a wide range of contemporary approaches to the study of magic
in the ancient world" (editors' foreword). Magic has become a critical term
for religious studies lately and, simultaneously, a booming topic of academic
interest, resulting in a cornocopia of publications that are sometimes hard to
follow and appreciate. It is even more difficult to tell new perspectives from
mere rearrangements of already known documents or propositions. In this
volume the reader will find both.

The 17 essays cover different fields of interest, ranging from methodolog-
ical problems to detailed case studies and philological questions, from the
early Greek period to medieval Viking religion. Although it may reflect a
multi-focussed perspective, the editors' decision not to divide the content into
different parts and even to omit an introduction that tries to contextualize the
volume's individual contributions makes it difficult for the reader to grasp
what really is at stake in contemporary scholarship. In general, the contribu-
tions focus on the malign aspect of magic, marginalizing its beneficent use.
Therefore, the proposition that 'magic' in ancient discourse is a category of
social and religious misbehavior goes unchallenged. But this exactly is part of
the problem, as can be studied with the volume's more theoretical essays: In
his contribution "Is magic a subclass to ritual?" (55-67), E. Thomassen pro-
poses that "after deconstruction has had its say, some work of reconstruction
may now be called for" (55f.). Discussing traditional theories of ritual and
performance he shows his discomfort with the result that "there seems to be
no difference in principle" between a religious and a magical ritual. There-
fore, he sticks to the definition that "[t]he rituals which we *intuitively* label

magical are characterized by their quality of being unofficial and private,"
further distinguishing magical rituals from other 'private' forms of devotion
"which *we normally do not want* to classify as magic, such as prayer, or mys-
tical exercises" (62, italics mine). Consequently, Thomassen describes magic
as "not only [...] unsocial, but even anti-social" (62). That this conception
owes a lot to Christian theology becomes even clearer when the "ego-centric
concentration of power in the magician" and his "imperative commands ex-
pressed in acts" come into play. This is not a reconstruction of a working-
concept of magic but the repetition of old apologetic dichotomies. A similar
criticism must be raised against J. Braarvig's essay "Magic: Reconsidering
the grand dichotomy" (21-54). After having reviewed the decline of theo-
logically connotated dichotomies he simply — and highly tautologically! —
establishes them anew: Religion is submissive, magic coercive; religion has
soteriological and collective aims, magic personal ones; religion is morally
accepted, magic is immoral, subversive and destructive; science is open for
"truth" (and compatible with religion), magic means persuasion, deceit and
fraud (see pp. 52f.). Reading these contributions, one wonders whether 'de-
construction' has ever taken place.

Fortunately, various scholars represented in the volume move beyond
those categories, thus breaking new ground for future studies. Taking into
account the complexity of antiquity's discourses about 'magic' they introduce
important differentiations: S.I. Johnston ("Songs for the ghosts: Magical
solutions to deadly problems", 83-102) argues that "the figure of the *goês*
[...] was the precise term for a professional communicator with the dead"
(92) and emerged from an Orphic background. As such, he "was anything
but an outcast, feared and detested by the average Greek of the classical
period" (95). F. Graf ("Magic and divination", 283-298) sheds new light
on the difficult relationship between the *magoi*, Divination, and Orphism
(which he also links to *goêteia*). H.S. Versnel, in his essay on "curse texts
and *Schadenfreude* (125-162)" proposes to subdivide the genre of *defixiones*.
With regard to their socio-religious function he correctly labels some of them
'prayer for justice' or 'judicial/vindictive prayer' (127) and contextualizes
them in the ancient culture of shame and honor. M.W. Dickie describes the
education of the "learned magician" and the transmission of his magical lore,
thus underlining the thesis recently put forward that much of the ancient
magical documents were written and used by members of the upper social
and religious layers. R. Gordon, likewise, addresses "the difference in the

practitioners' education and social location" (248). Two contributions — J.B. Curbera's and D. Bain's — further remind us that the impact of Egypt on magical, alchemical — and it may be added: esoteric — semantics is far more relevant than hitherto acknowledged.

All those approaches make sufficiently clear what is needed in further research: Detailed scrutinization of the various discourses, their rhetoric, their social contexts, and their *Trägergruppen*. This may also lead to a heuristic typology of the magical specialist, including her or his role in ancient society and religion.

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MICHAEL STAUSBERG, *Faszination Zarathushtra. Zoroaster und die Europäische Religionsgeschichte der Frühen Neuzeit* (Religionsgeschichtliche Versuche und Vorarbeiten, 42) — Berlin, New York: Mouton de Gruyter 1998, 2 vols. (1084 p.) ISBN 3-11-014959-1 (cloth) DM 470.00.

In recent years, German *Religionswissenschaft* has tried to open the door to a new orientation, although the restrictions that were imposed on it in the process of its institutionalization as part of university departments of theology are still alive and well. History of Religion stands for the history of religions outside Europe; within Europe, religion is dealt with under the heading of Church History, though obviously, religion in Europe is not restricted to Christianity. But since the seminal lecture held by Burkhard Gladigow in 1995, three monographs on the history of European religion have been published with different approaches: Ulrike Schlott, *Vorchristliche und christliche Beziehungen bei Kelten, Germanen und Slawen*, Hamburg 1997, restricts her topic to non-Christian 'religions in Europe', envisaging that they are to be studied mostly in their interaction with Christianization. A great deal of her effort was invested in developing new terms for conceptualizing this interaction. In 1996, the author of this review published a Groningen dissertation on *Mittelalterliche Eschatologie*, in which it is argued that religion as an integral part of an *histoire totale* must be studied in its full

social, local, and historical context and that one must look at the ways in which it achieved acceptance, because the object of *Religionswissenschaft* is the reception, not the conception, of religion. The third monograph is the one under review.

The two monumental volumes that make up the doctoral thesis written at the university of Bonn (with H.J. Klimkeit) are a program for as well as the realization of a history of European religion. It is, as Stausberg points out in his introduction (p. 1-34), not a history of religions in Europe (nor of European religion), but of the discourse on religion, debated in the early modern European 'network' of intellectuals, beginning in the Renaissance through the end of the Enlightenment. Thus, the process of 'classical' erudition emerges. Discourse on religion frees itself of the fetters of scholasticism and biblical exegesis. The even more ancient revelation of (first Hermes, then) Zoroaster provides a fixed point from which one can observe religion from the outside; the discussion is less restrained by confessional polemics than the discourse on Christian religion. The 'Zoroaster'-discourse allows criticism and counter-criticism of Christian religion, both as historical criticism, e.g., the placement of Zoroaster in sacred history compared with Moses, Noah, or the like, and as criticism of systematic/dogmatic terms, e.g., the Trinity. The Protestant conception of Catholicism as 'magical' is historicized or even seen as the polluted source of a subterranean river carrying the better, esoteric religion. Inserted into this history of European discourse on religion are 30 'discourses' opening new perspectives on such issues as magic, astrology, alchemy, editions of 'the text' of Zarathushtra, early stages of the scholarly discipline of Iranian studies, and on individual scholars.

By restricting his scope to traditions reaching as far back as the original Christian sources, the author does not include the discussion between ancient 'pagan' thinkers. On this question, Jan Bremmer has offered new insights in which Christian continuity is embedded ("The birth of the term 'Magic'," in: *Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik* 126 (1999), 1-12).

Two qualifying remarks: This massive work covers a period of more than 300 years, from Gemistos Plethon to Voltaire, and uncovers many unknown figures, or men known by name only. On the other hand, the rest of the story, i.e. the very different story of Nietzsche's Zarathustra, has yet to be written (see Michael Stausberg: "Zarathushtra in der Moderne I," in: *Mitteilungen für Anthropologie und Religionsgeschichte* 12, 1997 [1999], 313-324). Nevertheless, in the post-Enlightenment period religion is discussed in a very different

manner: Revelation is opposed to the eternal laws of nature, laws opposed to life, etc.

The work under review, Zoroaster in Europe, is only part of a greater endeavour; the other part, a history of Zarathushtra in Iran, is nearly completed. Stausberg is not only an excellent scholar of early modern European philosophy, but even more so of Iranian religion.

In sum, I would like to express first of all my admiration for the erudition of a very young scholar. Secondly, this opus magnum is a comprehensive thesaurus of the debate on religion in early modern Europe, which has the name Zoroaster as its starting point, a very fruitful, many-sided discussion that nevertheless gets at the heart of the topic. The thesaurus contains everything about Zoroaster, more than any reader could digest. However, *per aspera ad Zoroastria*, a star is born: 'Zoroaster', i.e. the history of 'religion' in early modern Europe, is a fundamental work, twin towers that will serve as a landmark for future studies.

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VOLKHARD KRECH, *Georg Simmels Religionstheorie* (Religion und Aufklärung, 4) — Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck 1998 (306 p.) ISBN 3-16-147031-1 (pbk.).

Georg Simmels Religionstheorie, the revised version of Volkhard Krech's Ph.D. thesis at Bielefeld University, aims to reveal Simmel's status as a sociological classic in the field of the study of religion alongside Max Weber, Émile Durkheim and Ernst Troeltsch.

The book's first and main part is dedicated to a profound analysis of Simmel's theory of religion the way it appears within the whole setting of his writings. The difficulty to gain access to the way Simmel conceives religious phenomena is, as Krech points out, at least partly due to the fact that Simmel did not develop an exclusive approach to them, but deals with religion from a variety of perspectives. In fact, Krech distinguishes four layers in the Simmelian work: psychology, sociology, cultural studies and philosophy of life. At each of them, religion is being dealt with. Thus, individual religiousness as a psychological category which belongs to the

inner, the "subjective culture" can be opposed, with Simmel, to socially institutionalised religion belonging to the "objective culture". From the perspective of cultural studies Simmel focuses on the role that religion might play in the process of the constitution of personal identity which is constantly threatened by the challenges of the modern world. In his philosophy of life, eventually, the previous perspectives are being integrated within a comprehensive view of religiousness as a mode of life by which the dynamic process of mutual interchange between "subjective" and "objective culture" proceeds.

The second part aims to reconstruct the impact that contemporary debates on religion exerted both on the genesis and the conception of Simmel's theory. To reveal the "tacit knowledge" (Polanyi) Simmel's conceptions are based on, and in order to restore his "ideal library", Krech sketches the main concerns of the interdisciplinary debates on religion at the turn of the century. Thus, one rediscovers, among others, some of the main representatives of protestant theology — like Friedrich Schleiermacher, Adolf von Harnack and Albrecht Ritschl — as important sources Simmel made use of. To find even Meister Eckhart among the authors he drew large inspiration from is not that surprising, if one takes into account that mysticism, the search for authentic religious experience was at the core of the attention of contemporary intellectuals.

Once he has analysed the genesis of Simmel's theory of religion and put it back into its original context, Krech, in the third part of his book, tries to reconcile the heterogeneous approaches to religious phenomena that, in his book's first part, he had distinguished in Simmel's writings. Though stressing their fundamental coherence and complementarity, Krech represents the sociological approach as the nucleus of Simmel's concern with religion and illuminates vice versa the significance that Simmel's theory of religion has for his sociological theory as a whole. Finally, the reader's attention is turned to the systematic relevance that Simmel's approach to religion might have to current debates within the field of religious studies, namely those concerned with the individualisation of religious life in modern society. Krech shows how Simmel, considering religiousness as a part of the "subjective culture", opens up a way how individuals can maintain their identity in face of the modern process of increasing social and cultural differentiation.

Georg Simmels Religionstheorie is a remarkable work by an author whose intimate acquaintance with Simmel's writings has already found its ex-

pression both in the Bielefeld edition of Simmel's complete works and in the history of the sociology of religion around 1900 (cf. *Georg Simmel-Gesamtausgabe*, vol. 8 and 10, as well as the collected essays *Religionssoziologie um 1900*, all three co-edited by Krech). Based on extensive bibliographical investigation, Krech's book will contribute decisively not only to deepen the knowledge about certain aspects of Simmel's work, but also to encourage further research in the historiography of religious studies.

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HELEN HARDACRE, *Marketing the Menacing Fetus in Japan* — Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press 1997 (310 p.) ISBN 0-520-20553-7 (cloth) $35.00.

Japanese culture kept and keeps fascinating Japanese and non-Japanese alike for any number of reasons. One of them, germane to the present review, is that in a world obsessed with fear of overpopulation Japan is (or was) worried by a shrinking birth rate. As the "pill" was de facto prohibited (for reasons that are better not mentioned here), and abortion de facto legal, the latter (rather than contraception) was the most widely practiced method of birth-control and family-planning, especially as traditional infanticide has been outlawed since Meiji. In some countries abortion clinics and their staff operate under threat, often religiously inspired, to their safety and lives. In Japan they can openly advertise, and temples that were on the brink of financial collapse some decades ago are now flourishing thanks to the "aborted embryo boom" and to the myriads of unborn souls needing "requiem masses", the latter openly propagated by a priesthood which evidently did not create the demand out of nothing but very actively exemplified the law of demand and supply, catering to the needs of tens (or hundreds) of thousands of women. But whence and why the demand and the need? What in this ritual practice is a continuation of older beliefs and cults (the need to pacify otherwise dangerously vengeful spirits? Buddhist mercy? Genuine parental love tinged by bad conscience and wishing to bring salvation to the unhappy errant souls?), and what are responses and adaptations to modern situations? The Japanese noun that originally signified mainly infant death, miscarriage

and stillborn babies now acquired the almost specific sense of deliberate, so-called "artificial", abortion.

The phenomenon has obviously generated an immense literature to which Prof. Hardacre's thorough and very sophisticated, though not always satisfying and convincing, study is the most recent contribution. The documentation is rich and contains much material and draws on many sources untapped by others, but yet somehow inadequate. The author unfortunately seems to over-estimate the value of certain publications and "research", and on the other hand ignores, or refers very misleadingly to, publications that have traversed the same ground no less thoroughly though less brilliantly. More interviews with women, bringing out the wide spectrum of attitudes, would have been desirable, and the handwritten inscriptions by parents, especially mothers, on the tens of thousands of *ema* (a kind of votive tablet, mainly appealing to Kannon or Jizo) in temple-grounds would merit systematic analysis. The detailed account of *mizuko kuyo* in four "locales" is thorough and illuminating but surely insufficient. A chronological survey (by locale and sect affiliation) of the adoption of the cult by temples would have made the account more valuable. A fascinating chapter could have been devoted to the motivation (and success) of the priest(s) who initiated the cult and to his consultations with the Buddhist sculptor who finally hit on the now ubiquitous standard type of Jizo representation, unknown in traditional iconography. The media obviously cashed in on this "spectacular" phenomenon, but their responsibility or co-responsibility for it, as suggested by Prof. Hardacre, (as distinct from indirect contribution) is surely an exaggeration, to put it mildly.

Criticism notwithstanding, this study is a valuable addition to our knowledge of modern Japan and the persistence in it of more ancient folk-beliefs, and one hopes that it will be the last major contribution to the study of *mizuko kuyo* as a contemporary phenomenon. In male dominated Japan the anti-impotence pill Viagra was immediately permitted and became a nationwide "bestseller". Perhaps also the ban on the contraception-pill, in force for decades, will be lifted some time and contraception may take the place of abortion. *Mizuko kuyo* will undoubtedly continue to exist, but in a minor key.

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JAMES L. COX, *Rational Ancestors: Scientific Rationality and African In-*
  digenous Religions — Cardiff: Cardiff Academic Press 1998 (265 p.)
  ISBN 1-899025-08-1 (pbk.) £ 16.95.

The book is divided into three complementary parts: theory and method,
the mythologumena, and rituals. The author demonstrates a central concern
for methodology in pursuit of 'hermeneutical' understanding of the specific
religious context of Zimbabwe. He highlights the enigma of terminology
which has blurred the understanding of indigenous African religions. Reject-
ing 'primal religion' as a non-empirical, christian theological construct, he
uses 'the religions of indigenous peoples' as a more scientific description of
religious phenomena, and adding 'geographical, ethnic and linguistic quali-
fiers where appropriate'. Specific problems relating to theories, definition of
myths and rituals in Africa are discussed. The author argues that cosmogonic
myths are rare in most parts of Africa, thus rendering inapplicable the clas-
sical theories which define myths as primarily cosmogonic. While this may
be largely true of Zimbabwean myths, it may not be a sufficient basis for
generalizing on the complexity of African myths. Using case studies based
largely on data obtained by his students (phenomenology of religion students
in the University of Zimbabwe), he debunks the myth-ritual hypothesis and
demonstrates, theoretically and practically, that rituals are not re-enactments
of myths. He opines that mythologumena and rituals provide the primary
wellspring for envisioning religious essence. His revised theory of myth and
ritual delineates a methodology for understanding by engaging in "diatopi-
cal hermeneutics" (Panikkar) or "a methodological conversion" (Krieger).
The author elucidates a new horizon of understanding through the system-
atic process of engaging his own "faith in the autonomy of reason" with the
faith of the indigenous Zimbabwean. Ostensibly not unaware of the limita-
tions of this method, he suggests its application in other religious milieux in
order to attain a scientific understanding. An inherent novelty in this book
lies in the documentation (parts two and three) of his students' description
of Zimbabwean myths and rituals. On the whole, the book demonstrates the

vital link between theory and praxis. Devoid of wide generalizations or classi-
fications based largely on superficial criteria, the study is a vital contribution
to knowledge, and forms a basis for comparative studies of African religions
and cultures. New vistas are thus opened to historians of religion, also com-
parativists, for methodologically reflected research on African religions.

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RELIGIONS IN THE DISENCHANTED WORLD

This special issue of NUMEN looks back at a century of religious studies. The very title of the journal — founded in the middle of that century — testifies to a powerful academic position at that time. It borrowed a notion coined by Rudolf Otto that conceived religion as an experience of an irrational power, expressed by the Latin term numinosum. Fifty years earlier the century had started with a tremendous academic and public concern for religious history. An unsurpassed variety of approaches analyzed a host of new religious data. The historization of human institutions, of family, law, state and society was extended to include religions. That this occurred in a period of rapid social and cultural change was no coincidence. The study of religious history was expected to shed light on the condition of human life not yet subjected to the power of rationality. Doubts regarding the belief in progress determined the attitude of historians of religions towards the past. They turned distant sources into world views of their own time, making sense of history, nature and identity. Weber introduced the notion of a disenchantment of the world to indicate the new place of past religions in the modern world: not residing in the external cosmos, but in the domain of subjective meanings. For that reason Weber expected apocalyptic sects and esoteric cults to be particularly popular in the modern age (Hans G. Kippenberg). It is exceedingly valuable to take a closer look at the institutionalization of religious studies as an academic enterprise (Volkhard Krech). By choosing an approach that analyzed religious traditions as a basic element of modern culture that did not vanish with the decline of churches, the protagonists of religious studies disclosed religious dimensions even of crucial modern institutions (as economy, individualism, human rights, art).

The rich and bold beginning of religious studies soon was followed by a narrowing of its focus. Religions were conceived as a more or less private matter not affected by the frightening social and political turmoil of the 20th century. When in the seventies apocalyptic views of history and esoteric conceptions of nature reemerged in public and became popular, the press and the media could not rely on scholarly notions that would have grasped these phenomena adequately. A new type of religious studies arose facing that challenge. Martin Riesebrodt destroyed the prejudice, that fundamentalism always was a backward movement carried by uneducated

people. He introduced the term as a scholarly concept that indicated a reaction of a traditional social milieu to modernity relying on the longstanding tradition of apocalypticism. The case of "New Age" was similar. What appeared to the media as a brand new kind of religion, was disclosed by Wouter Hanegraaff as an offshoot of an old philosophy of nature. In the present issue both authors address new issues in the line of their earlier groundbreaking research. Their contributions show that NUMEN shifted its focus.

A complete new subject, still unknown a century ago, has entered religious studies: labor migration. A new kind of mobility of religions is taking place: neither mission nor diffusion of ideas or practices. Martin Baumann addressing that issue in a comprehensive study, took up the established category of 'diaspora'. He forged it into an instrument that shows how external conditions affect traditional religions, when religious communities are established in foreign countries. The final contribution by Tom Lawson presents a theory of religions that claims to replace previous sociological and hermeneutical approaches by a new explanatory one. Just like Linguistics conceives of language as the capacity of talking, he approaches religion as a cognitive resource.

HANS G. KIPPENBERG

RELIGIOUS HISTORY, DISPLACED BY MODERNITY

Hans G. Kippenberg

The vanishing of 'history' from religious studies

Religious studies are flourishing again. Fifty years ago most scholars were convinced that religions definitely belonged to the past and were of interest only to a tiny group of specialists. Today religious studies are pursued by a host of people in a range of departments. Because of the relevance of cultural issues to the contemporary world, religions have moved from the periphery to the very center of public and academic concern. Their startling resurgence has given rise to a growing number of studies that explore this phenomenon in fresh, new ways. Among the many publications that have appeared recently, I would like to draw attention to a volume edited by Mark C. Taylor, which appeared in 1998. Entitled *Critical Terms for Religious Studies*,[1] it describes the field in terms of 22 notions — some of them old acquaintances, others newcomers — from 'belief' to 'writing'. Each article analyses the theoretical value of one of these notions, examining it "in a particular religious tradition."[2] Another volume, which appeared recently and which is entitled *Guide to the Study of Religion*[3] likewise explores such notions as 'classification', 'comparison', and 'gender' — 31 notions in all. Examining the concepts in the two volumes, I was struck by the absence of both 'history' and 'tradition' from each; ironically, only 'modernity' has survived. As it happens, though, the essay on 'modernity' by Gustavo Benavides in *Critical Terms* is not a bad substitute for the two 'missing' essays.[4] Benavides conceives of

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[1] Mark C. Taylor (ed.), *Critical Terms for Religious Studies*. Chicago/London 1998.

[2] *Critical Terms* p. 18.

[3] Willi Braun/Russell T. McCutcheon (eds.), *Guide to the Study of Religion*. London/New York 2000.

[4] "Modernity," in Taylor, *Critical Terms* pp. 186-204.

modernity as a self-conscious distancing from the past — a break different in the domain of knowledge than in the domain of morality or aesthetics. Since modern reflexivity is self-referential, the separation of these domains has not led to the disappearance of religions altogether, but to their "reflexive ordering and reordering" (G. Benavides).[5] (This, sadly, would have been a perfect point of departure for an essay on the 'history' or 'traditions' of religions!)

In his preface to *Critical Terms*, Taylor argues for a position that makes the lacuna plausible: 'religion' is not a universal phenomenon, but rather the product of a complex Western history. He refers to Jonathan Z. Smith's essay 'Religion', which also appears in this volume. The essay is particularly valuable, since J.Z. Smith elaborates in it on his provocative sentence: "there is no data for religion. Religion is solely the creation of the scholar's study."[6] Smith's essay in *Critical Terms* traces, step by step, how the use and understanding of the Western term 'religion' has been expanding since the sixteenth century, and also how it became a category imposed from the outside on native cultures, and claimed as something universal and natural to everybody.[7] This observation of Smith's and Taylor's is in line with a major issue in historical studies today: the break between facts and words and between the past and the present. A dilemma haunting anthropologists[8] and historians haunts students of religions too: namely, that evidence cannot be clearly be distinguished from representation. Taylor conceives of the issue in terms of 'invention': "Far from existing prior to and independent of any inquiry, the very phenomenon of religion is constituted by local discursive practices. The investigators create — sometimes unknowingly — the objects and

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[5] *Critical Terms* p. 189.

[6] Jonathan Z. Smith, *Imagining Religion. From Babylon to Jonestown*. Chicago/London 1982, p. XI.

[7] *Critical Terms* p. 269.

[8] Clifford Geertz, *Works and Lives. The Anthropologist as Author*. Cambridge 1988; James Clifford, *The Predicament of Culture. Twentieth-Century Ethnography, Literature, and Art*. Cambridge (Mass.)/London 1988, cf. in particular "On ethnographic authority" pp. 21-54.

truths they profess to discover. Some critics claim that appearances to the contrary withstanding, religion is a *modern Western invention.*"[9]

Imagining religious history

But is this a reasonable conclusion? I think that there is a flaw in the argument. Taylor confuses the issue of historical imagination with that of fiction. If one ignores that distinction, there is no need anymore for notions like 'history' or 'tradition', indicating a past effecting the present. If the referent is not only represented but even replaced by historiography, historians are presenting fictions in the guise of facts. As a consequence 'history' and 'tradition' do not belong to the basic critical terms in religious studies. The question is: What are we loosing and what are we gaining by doing so? In answering it I first would like to explain why the distinction is basic to any theory of history. It is obvious for everybody reading or writing history that the representation of past data cannot be easily distinguished from imagination or fiction. Where exactly runs the line between them? That dilemma has fuelled reflections on historiography since the 19th century. The complex and rich debate quickly has turned into the fundamental issue of the validity of any historical knowledge in comparison particularly with natural sciences. Instead of going into all the details I restrict myself to short comments on the issues of the evidence and of imagination, backed by two recent authors. The first point concerns the status of historical sources. There is a wide

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[9] *Critical Terms* p. 7. Taylor's position seems to me confusing as regards the status of theory: either theories of the scholars refer to the same data (and compete in explaining them) or they constitute different data (and describe them from different angles). These two possibilities clearly need to be distinguished. In the first case, theories are competing explanations of the same data, while in the second they are complementary perspectives on the same data. The difference is nicely explained in a sharp letter by Robert A. Segal to the editor of *Method and Theory in the Study of Religion* 11 (1999) pp. 75-76. That the plurality of definitions, current in religious studies, should be regarded as case of pragmatics, is the common denominator in Jan G. Platvoet/Arie L. Molendijk (eds.), *The Pragmatics of Defining Religion. Contexts, Concepts and Contests.* Leiden 1999.

agreement, that evidence is not natural. When a historian refers to a 'fact', he or she does not refer to something natural or even evident. The 'fact' too has to be conceived. That happens along different lines, as a recent debate has demonstrated again. Hayden White conceived of a 'fact' as the outcome of a process turning unstructured 'events' into a narration. The narrative genre functions like a protocol processing data. Its rhetorical means metapher, metonymy, synekdoche and irony are establishing these 'facts'. Evidence is not natural, but constituted according to elementary narrative forms. The imagination of the historian and the structure of evidence belong together.[10] Paul Ricoeur rejected this concept of facts, because of its privileging the narrative form. According to him the historian breaks with the level of narration. The historical operation consists of three interrelated but independent steps: selecting and studying documents as witnesses of past events, explaining actions generating these events, conceiving of a text. The fundamental difference compared with Hayden White are the notions of action and of time.[11] This debate is only one among others. Whether one follows White or Ricoeur or somebody else: The need for an explication of what is meant by 'fact' is inevitable, since it is part and parcel of the historical operation. No scholar of religions can or should avoid it.

A second assumption has to do with the subjective concern of the historian that informs his choice of documents, his construction of facts and his text. This activity is a kind of transcendental category in historiography that cannot be removed. Since facts exist only due to the meanings attributed to them, historical interpretation is firmly connected with them. What we need are methods for a critical

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[10] Hayden White, "Figuring the Nature of the Times Deceased: Literary Theory and Historical Writing," in: Ralph Cohen (ed.), *The Future of Literary History*. New York/London 1989. German translation: "Literaturtheorie und Geschichtsschreibung," in: Herta Nagl-Docekal (ed.), *Der Sinn des Historischen. Geschichtsphilosophische Debatten*. Frankfurt 1996, pp. 67-106.

[11] Paul Ricoeur, "Histoire et rhétorique," in: *Diogène* 168 (1994), pp. 1-18. German translation "Geschichte und Rhetorik," in: Herta Nagl-Docekal *Der Sinn des Historischen* pp. 107-125.

evaluation of them. Among them comparison in particular is yielding. A comparison of the texts of historians reveals that their perceptions of the past depend on their attitudes to the present. Historians in describing past facts do more than chronicle them: they turn these facts into something worth remembering, attribute significance to them.[12] Notions like 'nation', 'class' and 'religion' likewise transform historical data into concepts relevant to the contemporary world of the scholars. In my book *Die Entdeckung der Religionsgeschichte. Religionswissenschaft und Moderne*[13] I have used this point of view in order to demonstrate that the study of past religions by 'classical' scholars of religions has been informed by their experience of the rise of the modern world. Imagining past religions is not necessarily arbitrary. To the contrary: it can be an important source revealing how scholars and their audience reacted to the passing away of traditions and to the challenges of modernity. Brute facts about the past are read as containing experiences, relevant to present expectations.[14] The meaning historians attribute to them is open to an examination of the evidence. There is no other way to distinguish imagination from fiction except in terms of their different epistemological status in the face of historical evidence.

Behind the issue looms a larger one: that the expectation of a vanishing of religions from the modern world has failed. The idea of

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[12] Jörn Rüsen, *Historische Vernunft. Grundzüge einer Historik* I: *Die Grundlagen der Geschichtswissenschaft*. Göttingen 1983 chapter 2: "Pragmatik — Die lebenspraktische Konstitution des historischen Denkens"; cf. Klaus E. Müller/Jörn Rüsen (ed.), *Historische Sinnbildung. Problemstellungen, Zeitkonzepte, Wahrnehmungshorizonte, Darstellungsstrategien*. Reinbek 1997.

[13] München 1997. An English translation will appear with Princeton University in 2001.

[14] The issue has been clearly detailed by Reinhard Koselleck, " 'Erfahrungsraum' und 'Erwartungshorizont' — zwei historische Kategorien." Idem, *Vergangene Zukunft. Zur Semantik geschichtlicher Zeiten*. Frankfurt/M. 1979, pp. 349-375. Cf. Keith Jenkins, *Re-Thinking History*. London/New York 1991 pp. 27-57, and Chris Lorenz, *Konstruktion der Vergangenheit. Eine Einführung in die Geschichtstheorie*. Köln/Weimar/Wien 1997, pp. 177-187.

progress that supported that expectation gave way to an epistemology of history. The German sociologist Georg Simmel explained this well in a book about the philosophy of history. Referring to Kant, he pointed out that according to Kant nature is a pervasive power for mankind. Kant's critical epistemology turned that inconceivable power into categories of the human mind; Simmel wanted to do the same with history.[15] We deserve a critical reflection on history, in order to turn the tacit power of history into concepts of the human mind. I think that Simmel's idea helps to clarify the issue. Simmel and others assumed religion as a lasting power in the modern world. Isn't it naive to think of religions as deserving our recognition because of their wonderful expression of cultural difference and personal identity? There is sufficient reason to believe that people can be trapped in religious traditions just as they are trapped in natural laws, unable to escape from either. It appears that 'history' and 'tradition' are most crucial and relevant terms in religious studies today. Without them we never will be able to conceive of modernity as "a reflexive ordering and reordering of religions", to quote Benavides. Though referring to the revival of 'religious tradition', Mark Taylor excluded even 'tradition' from his 'critical terms'. But if modernity involves a continuation of the past as well as a break with it, as the rise of the notion itself indicates,[16] we need to know the past in order to know the present. In the words of Dilthey: "What man is, only history tells him."

A debate in 1910 among social scientists about the lasting power of religions

Is the present scholarly generation really the first that senses the power of religious traditions? Mark Taylor appears to think so, judging from these words: "A century that began with modernism sweeping

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[15] Georg Simmel, *Die Probleme der Geschichtsphilosophie* (1907), ed. by Guy Oakes/Kurt Röttgers. Georg Simmel, Gesamtausgabe. Vol. 9, Frankfurt/M. 1997, pp. 229-230.

[16] Hans Robert Jauss, "Antiqui/moderni (Querelle des Anciens et Modernes)." In: *Historisches Wörterbuch der Philosophie*. Bd.1. Darmstadt 1971, pp. 410-414.

across Europe is ending with a remarkable resurgence of religious beliefs and practices throughout the world."[17] However, we only have to return to the first meeting of German sociologists in Frankfurt in 1910 to see the situation then as very different from the one that Taylor suggests. On 21 October 1910, the church historian Ernst Troeltsch gave a paper on "Stoic-Christian Natural Law and Modern Secular Natural Law."[18] It elicited such an intense debate — in which Max Weber, Georg Simmel, Ferdinand Tönnies, Eberhard Gothein, Martin Buber, and Ernst Kantorowicz participated — that the minutes of the meeting were published as well.[19]

Some of the scholars attending were convinced that modern phenomena such as 'capitalism' and 'individualism' could not be understood in terms of their modern function alone. The ethos of hard work or the notion of human rights, necessary for the functioning of modern institutions, had their roots in a particular Western cultural history, to which Judaism, Hellenism, Roman culture, and Christianity had made fundamental contributions. It was this conviction that heightened scholarly interest even in highly specialized areas of religious history. Max Weber appears to be alluding to that conviction when he writes at the end of his famous essay "The Protestant Ethic and the 'Spirit' of Capitalism" (1904-5): "The modern man is in general, even with the best will, unable to give religious ideas a significance for culture and national character which they deserve."[20] The social scientist knew better: despite the modernity of economic or legal institutions, the mentality informing them was something different entirely.

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[17] *Critical Terms* p. 1.

[18] Ernst Troeltsch, "Das stoisch-christliche Naturrecht und das moderne profane Naturrecht," in: *Verhandlungen des Ersten Deutschen Soziologentages vom 19.-22. Oktober 1910 in Frankfurt a. M.* Tübingen 1911 pp. 166-192. The paper was published separately in: *Historische Zeitschrift* 106 (1911) pp. 237-267.

[19] The minutes are published in *Verhandlungen des Ersten Deutschen Soziologentages* pp. 192-214.

[20] Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism.* Translated by Talcott Parsons (1930). London/New York 1997, p. 183.

Troeltsch had devoted many years to this issue in his research. In
a well-known article on "The Significance of Protestantism for the
Rise of the Modern World,"[21] he argued that the modern world was
a continuation of the pre-modern one particularly with respect to indi-
vidualism — which, far from being the outcome of an emancipation
from tradition, had religious roots. Ideas can remain powerful, even
if contested seriously.[22] The paper that he gave in 1910 addressed the
puzzling fact that Christianity had been institutionalised by three dis-
tinct social forms: the 'church' that administered the sacraments, the
'sect' as a community of true and serious believers, and finally 'mysti-
cism' as a radical form of individualism. Each of these social forms
established a distinct guiding principle for dealing with the natural
laws of the world. The 'church' regarded these natural laws as nec-
essarily different from the perfect law of Christ, and did not expect the
laity to act according the latter law. The 'sect', in contrast, recognised
one law only, that of unconditional brotherliness, and created a fun-
damental tension between the perfect believer and the natural world.
And finally, 'mysticism', which took the divine light to be inside the
believer, established an individualism independent of any community
and justified an indifference to the external world, religious institutions
included. According to Troeltsch, then, these three social forms repre-
sented three different concepts of a Christian attitude to the world and
its laws, all three forms being genuinely Christian.

Troeltsch's paper though highly specialised hit a crucial point,
as the debate shows. The minutes (which, as I already noted, were
published together with the lecture) give unique access to the concerns
of many of the period's major intellectual figures, searching for the
roots of the mental conditions operative in the modern world. Georg

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[21] "Die Bedeutung des Protestantismus für die Entstehung der modernen Welt."
Historische Zeitschrift 97 (1906) pp. 1-66. Later published separately in revised
form as *Die Bedeutung des Protestantismus für die Entstehung der modernen Welt.*
München/Berlin 1911.

[22] "Die heutige Welt lebt so wenig wie irgendeine andere von der Konsequenz;
geistige Mächte können herrschen, auch wenn man sie bestreitet" (*Bedeutung des
Protestantismus* 1911, p. 22).

Simmel, who had published a book on religion in 1906,[23] raised doubts that Christianity had any social significance at all, given that it recognised one problem only: the soul and its relation to god.[24] Demanding brotherly love, it transposed this demand from the real world to the domain of the soul and its god alone. The attitude to the world was accordingly one of indifference.[25] Martin Buber, too, pointed out in the debate that mysticism was not a social category at all, but only a psychological one, which denied the value of any community. A year earlier, Buber had, with Eugen Diederichs, edited *Ekstatische Konfessionen*, a collection of confessions of mystics. In his preface to this volume, he had interpreted the experiences that lay behind these documents as those of witnessing something essential in human life, which transcended rationality.[26] Contemporary man, on this understanding of life, is misrepresented by modern institutions and cut off from realising the potential of his own self. In contemplating historical documents, he is able, at least, to recognise this gap.[27]

Max Weber also took the floor. Five years earlier, he had traced the rise of capitalism to Puritan Protestantism. A market economy required an ethos different from that required by a traditional economy. Puritan sects had played a role in bringing about the necessary transformation: they had instructed their members to seek salvation not by relying on sacraments, but by working hard and abstaining from pleasures. People who transformed that attitude into practice contributed (inadvertently or not) to the rise of a market economy. But their suc-

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[23] Georg Simmel, *Die Religion*. Frankfurt/M., 1906.

[24] *Verhandlungen* p. 204.

[25] *Verhandlungen* p. 205. According to Volkhard Krech Simmel has been stimulated by the vitalist discussion on mysticism. *Georg Simmels Religionstheorie*. Tübingen 1998, p. 210.

[26] M. Buber (ed.) *Ekstatische Konfessionen* (1909) München, 2. ed. 1994 by Peter Sloterdijk. "Zuerst scheint der Mensch mit dem Namen Gottes vornehmlich das erklärt zu haben, was er an der Welt nicht verstand, dann aber immer öfter das, was der Mensch an sich nicht verstand. So wurde die Ekstase — das, was der Mensch an sich am wenigsten verstehen konnte — zu Gottes höchster Gabe" (p. 55).

[27] *Verhandlungen* pp. 206-7.

cess had a high price: it turned personal conviction into an iron law. "The Puritans wanted to work toward a calling; we are forced to do so. For when asceticism was carried out of monastic cells into everyday life, and began to dominate worldly morality, it did its part in building the tremendous cosmos of the modern economic order." The Puritan ethos became an "iron cage".[28] His own research led Weber to reject Troeltsch's thesis that only the church, and not the sects, could establish Christianity as a truly popular religion.[29] The case of the United States, Weber argued, leads to the opposite conclusion: exclusivity did not prevent sects from becoming popular. The United States were (and are) "the most religious country", in terms not only of quantity of adherents, but also of devoutness. But there "Christianity had (and has) for the most part adopted the form of sects:" "It is precisely because religion has, in fact, taken the form of the sect that religion has become so popular."[30] Weber also addressed the issue of mysticism, and defended against Buber's critique the claim of Troeltsch that mysticism is a genuine social form of Christianity. This has been shown, for example, in the impact that the Orthodox church has had on Russian philosophy and literature, and in the fact that even the rise of Russian agrarian communism can be traced to the Orthodox church. Religious history explains the mind behind modern practices.

That Mark Taylor is not familiar with these debates is perhaps not his own fault, and has a great deal to do with the history of our discipline. After the First World War, anti-historicism spread in religious studies, severing for decades the link between the study of religions and that of modern institutions. To see this intellectual shift,

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[28] Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* p. 181.

[29] "Das stoisch-christliche Naturrecht und das moderne profane Naturrecht" p. 175.

[30] "Gerade, weil der religiöse Typus dort faktisch der Sektentypus ist, ist die Religion dort Volkssache, und weil dieser Sektentypus nicht universal, sondern exklusiv ist, und weil exklusiv, seinen Anhängern innerlich und äußerlich ganz bestimmte Vorzüge bietet, darum ist dort die Stätte des Universalismus der effektiven Zugehörigkeit zu religiösen Gemeinschaften" (*Verhandlungen* p. 201; reprinted in M. Weber, *Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Soziologie und Sozialpolitik*. Tübingen 1924, pp. 468-469).

one need only compare articles in consecutive editions of *Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart* (*RGG*). Take, for example, the entry 'sects'. In the first (and in the second edition too) of *RGG*, we find the author Köhler pointing to the statistical increase in the importance of sects and explaining it as an inevitable reaction to the institution of the church and its accommodation to the world.[31] Here, we can still recognise — though in a watered-down form — the issue raised by Ernst Troeltsch: differences between types of Christian communities represent different attitudes to the world. In the third edition of *RGG*, the focus of the entry has been narrowed still further. Now Christian sects are presented as marginal and as disturbing the unity of the church. No word about the sect being a social form of its own with a different but genuine attitude to the word, equal to the church. By the time that this kind of Christian social form became popular again, in the 1970s and 1980s, the established notion of sect could no longer be used to represent this phenomenon. This led the media to introduce the term 'fundamentalism' — which conveyed the message that fundamentalists were backward and uneducated people, not part of the modern world or genuine Christianity either.

Sects and their return as fundamentalisms, challenging the belief in progress

The astonishing career of 'fundamentalism' has triggered a wave of scholarly studies, which peaked in the years 1989-90. When historians of religion undertook more detailed research into 'fundamentalisms', they already knew that the notion was misleading. Though the practice of defining genuine Christianity in terms of fundamental doctrines was important to these groups,[32] the notion covered neither the entire range of their concerns nor even the most important one. Moreover, it mistak-

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[31] Köhler, "Sekten: I. Dogmengeschichtlich." *RGG* 5. Bd. Tübingen 1913, pp. 569-575.

[32] In 1910 the General Assembly of the Presbyterians adopted a five point declaration, containing the following essential doctrines: "the inerrancy of Scripture, the virgin birth of Christ, the atonement of Christ, the resurrection of Christ and the miracle-working power of Christ" (Ernest R. Sandeen, *The Roots of Fundamentalism. British*

enly emphasised doctrine and neglected the importance of millenarian expectation when, in fact, the latter was the more important. In other words, it was millenarianism, as E.R. Sandeen observes, "which gave life and shape to the Fundamentalist movement."[33] The fundamentalist view of history, then, was part of a surprising renewal of millenarianism in the nineteenth and twentieth century.[34] This is surprising because millenarianism had lost its reputation among educated people after the devastating civil wars of the seventeenth century. However, the failure of the French Revolution, together with a loss of faith in reason, had allowed millenarianism to flourish again; and during the first period of industrialisation in Germany as well as in England, millenarian Protestant sects grew like wildfire.[35] American Protestants adopted the doctrines of John Nelson Darby (1800-1892), who taught that the millennium would begin suddenly with the rapture of true believers. Afterwards, the great tribulation would come, together with the ascendancy of the Antichrist. Premillennialism, as this scenario is called, enjoyed a popularity in the twentieth century that was not confined to fundamentalist sects. One source of evidence for this is Hal Lindsey and C.C. Carlson's *The Late Planet Earth* (1970),[36] which takes the threat of a nuclear war and the restoration of Israel as fulfillments of biblical prophecies. The apocalyptic clock is ticking again, the final battle at Armageddon in Palestine is at hand.

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and American Millenarianism 1800-1930. Chicago 1970, pp. 250-251). There were other declarations with more than five points.

[33] Ernest R. Sandeen, *The Roots of Fundamentalism* p. XV.

[34] We owe a history of the ideas of messianic revolution in the West during the entire second millennium to David S. Katz/Richard H. Popkin, *Messianic Revolution. Radical Religious Politics to the End of the Second Millennium.* New York 1999.

[35] Eric J. Hobsbawm, *Primitive Rebels. Studies in Archaic Forms of Social Movements in the 19th and 20th Centuries.* New York 1959, chapter VIII; Lucian Hölscher, *Weltgericht oder Revolution. Protestantische und sozialistische Zukunftsvorstellungen im deutschen Kaiserreich.* Stuttgart 1989, pp. 74-134.

[36] This book has had a tremendous impact on spreading the conception, that a terrifying disaster is at hand, preceding final redemption. Until 1990 no less than 28 million copies have been sold.

Let us now take a closer look at some of the research that has addressed the phenomenon of fundamentalism. Martin E. Marty's 1988 article "The Study of Protestant Fundamentalism as a Social Phenomenon",[37] can be seen to have inaugurated this research on a large scale. Marty conceived of the typical fundamentalist as someone who does belong to the modern world, but who fights back against it. Moreover, fundamentalism was not, according to Marty, confined to uneducated people.[38] An international research project, now complete, which Marty led together with R. Scott Appleby,[39] scrutinised fundamentalist movements in Christianity, Judaism, Islam, and Hinduism in an attempt to address such questions — in particular, the question of fundamentalists to the modern world. A crucial distinction between 'modernity' and 'modernism' was introduced into the study of fundamentalism in a detailed examination of the subject by Bruce Lawrence. "*Modernity,*" according to Lawrence, "is the emergence of a new index of human life shaped, above all, by increasing bureaucratization and rationalization as well as technical capacities and global exchange unthinkable in the premodern era. *Modernism,*" on the other hand, "is the search for individual autonomy driven by a set of socially encoded

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[37] Martin E. Marty, "Fundamentalism as a Social Phenomenon." *Bulletin of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences* 42 (1988) pp. 15-29.

[38] Marty characterized fundamentalists as people perceiving the threats of the modern world, that engage in retrieving certain fundamentals, select them according to their scandalous character, form an exclusive movement, support a dualistic world view, regard relativism and pluralism as their enemies, reject the idea of progress and belief in an imminent end of history.

[39] The project has resulted in five impressive volumes, published with Chicago University Press. They contain a huge amount of information about religions in the modern world. Martin E. Marty/R. Scott Appleby (ed.), *Fundamentalisms Observed.* Vol. 1, 1991; *Fundamentalisms and Society.* Vol. 2, 1993; *Fundamentalisms and the State,* Vol. 3, 1993; *Accounting for Fundamentalisms.* Vol. 4, 1994; *Fundamentalisms Comprehended.* Vol. 5, 1995. The editors have also published some of the results in a small paperback entitled *The Glory and the Power. The Fundamentalist Challenge to the Modern World.* Boston 1992. German translation: *Herausforderung Fundamentalismus. Radikale Christen, Moslems und Juden im Kampf gegen die Moderne.* Frankfurt 1996.

values emphasizing change over continuity; quantity over quality; effi-
cient production, power, and profit over sympathy for traditional values
or vocations, in both the public and private spheres."[40] Fundamental-
ists, on this view, participate in modernity but resist paying tribute to
the spirit of modernism.

The fundamentalist movement has also received a sociological ex-
planation, in Martin Riesebrodt's study *Pious Passion.*[41] In the United
States, Riesebrodt pointed out, fundamentalists belong mainly to the
white Protestant Anglo-Saxon middle class, which was once proud
of its particular ethos. For this group, hard work, diligence, modesty,
chastity, and frugality were the will of God. But with industrialisation,
bureaucratisation, urbanisation, and science, all of these virtues lost
their high status. With this loss, the Protestant group disintegrated into
factions, each with different visions of the future — liberal Protestants
believing in a gradual transition from the present world to the kingdom
of God through improving social conditions, fundamentalists rejecting
any optimistic conception of the future. On the latter view, the rise
of modern society was necessarily accompanied by an apostasy from
Christian ethics and would inevitably end in disaster. Fundamentalists
thus offered their premillenarian scenario as a challenge to the liberal
belief in progress and in established communities of genuine believers.
With the rise of fundamentalism and the consequent desire of scholars
of religion to understand it better, the study of sects which rejected
the world yet still remained immensely popular returned to religious
studies.

The reappraisal of apocalypticism during the twentieth century af-
fected even philosophers, as demonstrated by a famous debate between
Karl Löwith and Hans Blumenberg. In his stimulating *Meaning in*

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[40] Bruce B. Lawrence, *Defenders of God. The Fundamentalist Revolt against the
Modern Age.* San Francisco 1989 p. 27.

[41] Martin Riesebrodt: *Fundamentalismus als patriarchalische Protestbewegung.
Amerikanische Protestanten (1910-28) und Iranische Schiiten (1961-1979) im Ver-
gleich.* Tübingen 1990. Engl. Translation: *Pious Passion. The Emergence of Modern
Fundamentalism in the United States and Iran.* Berkeley 1993.

History, Karl Löwith traced the belief in progress to biblical eschatology.[42] Löwith's evidence that such a secularization took place was compelling. But did this form of secularization entail a complete secularization of biblical belief? Hans Blumenberg rejected Löwith's claim and initiated a debate on this issue, which is still going on today.[43] According to Blumenberg, apocalypticism and the belief in progress have different roots. The former was a specific response to the rise of science and technology that began in the eighteenth century, and presented an image of the future as an open space to be gradually filled in by predictable developments. Apparently, however, religious expectations of a millennium did not vanish with this belief, but coexisted with a secular idea of progress. There is no real contradiction here, since such expectations point to an existential problem, to the question of the meaning of life. As such, neither understanding of history can replace the other. Although Blumenberg might have underestimated the interrelation between the two kinds of expectations,[44] he explained rather convincingly why people living in a scientific-industrial world have reasons to hold fast to an apocalyptic scenario. The tradition has a distinct place in the modern world. Scholars of religions likewise have grasped, that the meaning of past religious traditions cannot be determined without their present resonance.

Mysticism and its return as esotericism, challenging the belief in a rational mastering of nature

A case similar to 'Fundamentalism' is 'New Age'. Let us return once more to the *RGG*, this time to examine the entry for 'mysticism'. In the first edition of *RGG*, published in 1910, a special subsection

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[42] Karl Löwith, *Meaning in History*. Chicago 1949. German version: *Weltgeschichte und Heilsgeschehen. Die theologischen Voraussetzungen der Geschichtsphilosophie* 5.ed. Stuttgart 1967, pp. 11-12.

[43] Hans Blumenberg, *Die Legitimität der Neuzeit*. Frankfurt 1966, pp. 25-42. Malcolm Bull deals with that debate in his introduction to *Apocalypse Theory and the Ends of the World*. Oxford 1995, pp. 1-17.

[44] The point of M. Bull o.c.

entitled 'New Mysticism'[45] described contemporary attempts to re-
assess mysticism. The author of the entry emphasized that the move-
ment was a new one, inspired by Friedrich Schleiermacher, by the nat-
ural philosophy of G.T. Fechner, and by Buddhism. Adherents of this
form of mysticism made use of the mystical texts published by Eu-
gen Diederichs, which bore witness to an ancient religious tradition,
and which spoke to them of an inner experience that revealed the hu-
man self's divine essence, higher than any authority. The movement
hoped to empower the individual to resist rationality and materialism
by reconfirming a religious tradition.[46] This 'New Mysticism' suben-
try reappeared in the second edition of *RGG*, published in 1930, where
the author now celebrated Rainer Maria Rilke's *Stundenbuch* (1906)
as the perfection of a new mysticism,[47] yet avoided any reference to
the cultural and political significance that mysticism had in Germany
at the end of 1920s. The 'New Mysticism' subentry is still present in
the third edition of *RGG*, published in 1960, but now refers to the re-
vival of mysticism about 1900! Apparently the two World Wars and the
dominance of political concerns have made this type of religion a pri-
vate matter without public claims; no allusion is made to mysticism as
a social form of Christianity, with a long history and great public reso-
nance. No attempt was made at imagining a past Christian practice as
relevant to the present world.

In the 1960s, however, the assessment of the mystical tradition be-
gan to change again. People in the West began tapping heterodox and
pagan traditions to achieve a new kind of religiosity: one that involved
goddess worship, magic, witchcraft, astrology, and prophecy. The me-
dia that spread these ideas were bookstores, therapies, seminars, and

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[45] W. Hoffmann, "Mystik": III. "Neue Mystik." *RGG* Vol. 4. Tübingen 1913,
pp. 608-612.

[46] Gangolf Hübinger, "Kulturkritik und Kulturpolitik des Eugen-Diederichs-
Verlags im Wilhelminismus. Auswege aus der Krise der Moderne?" In: H. Renz/F.W.
Graf (eds.), *Umstrittene Moderne.* Troeltsch-Studien 4. Gütersloh 1987 pp. 92-114;
idem (ed.), *Versammlungsort moderner Geister. Der Eugen Diederichs Verlag — Auf-
bruch ins Jahrhundert der Extreme.* Munich 1996.

[47] RGG[2], Vol. 4, Tübingen 1930, p. 358.

music. Since the groups concerned did not have prior ties to a church, sociologists of religion referred to them as 'cults' to distinguish them from 'sects'.[48] The notion of 'cult' had a clear genealogy, its roots lying in a kind of 'cultural translation' of Troeltsch's third category in the group consisting of 'church', 'sect', and 'mysticism'.[49] While Troeltsch conceived of 'mysticism' as an expression of genuine individuality, which rejected both community and the culture of rationalism, American scholars severed the connection between the rejection of a dominant culture and genuine individuality, since the former could be an activity of an entire group. As a consequence, Troeltsch's notion of 'mysticism' disintegrated: into personal mystical religions, on the one hand, and deviant religious communities, on the other. This disintegration created a new problem: how to describe the guiding idea of 'cults'? The English scholar Colin Campbell presented a solution: "Given that cultic groups have a tendency to be ephemeral and highly unstable, it is a fact that new ones are being born just as fast as the old ones die. There is a continual process of cult formation and collapse which parallels the high turnover of membership at the individual level. Clearly, therefore, cults must exist within a milieu which, if not conducive to the maintenance of individual cults, is clearly highly conducive to the spawning of cults in general."[50] The religious milieu of cult members is thus accorded greater importance than the guiding ideas of the various cults.

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[48] "When a sect breaks away from a church, it takes with it the label 'religion'. But cults are not born with the religious label attached:" Rodney Stark/William Sims Bainbridge, *The Future of Religion. Secularization, Revival, and Cult Formation.* Berkeley 1985, p. 34.

[49] Colin Campbell, "The Cult, the Cultic Milieu and Secularization". *Sociological Yearbook of Religion in Britain* 5 (1972) pp. 119-136; cf. Hubert Knoblauch, "Das unsichtbare Zeitalter. 'New Age', privatisierte Religion und kultisches Milieu." *KZSS* 41 (1989) pp. 504-525 on pp. 511-513; Hubert Knoblauch, *Die Welt der Wünschelrutengänger und Pendler. Erkundungen einer verborgenen Wirklichkeit.* Frankfurt/New York 1991, pp. 29-30.

[50] C. Campbell, "The Cult, the Cultic Milieu and Secularization" pp. 121-122.

One significant element of this phenomenon — 'New Age' — began to receive serious scholarly attention, for which the years 1994-96 were decisive. These years saw the appearance of three monographs that analysed this elusive phenomenon, which resembled 'fundamentalism' insofar as 'New Age', too, was a fashionable label spread by the media and publishers. The German scholar Christoph Bochinger traced the rise of this popular label, showing how it subsumed many distinct phenomena. For this reason, his book is a comprehensive treatment of the entire range of 'New Age' themes.[51] Paul Helaas, in his *New Age Movement*, sought to reduce the variety of beliefs and practices that 'New Age' represented by claiming the existence of a kind of guiding idea behind these beliefs and practices: a concept of the human self transcending the power of tradition.[52] 'Detraditionalization' is the key notion in his approach. It also became the title of a collection of essays that he edited by well-known scholars of religious and social studies.[53] The beliefs and practices of New Age serve in an attempt to liberate the self from the power of a tradition that has separated mind and matter, subject and object, individual and nature. 'New Age' is a distinctly modern phenomenon, accelerating the fall of traditional man. Though Helaas presents a strong thesis, one element remains mysterious: where does the notion of a self transcending the power of the traditional world come from? Helaas appears to have ignored the studies, whose numbers and arguments are substantial, that have traced the modern concept of the self to religious sources.[54]

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[51] Christoph Bochinger, *'New Age' und moderne Religion. Religionswissenschaftliche Analysen.* Gütersloh, 2. ed. 1995.

[52] Paul Helaas, *The New Age Movement. The Celebration of the Self and the Sacralization of Modernity.* Oxford 1996.

[53] Paul Helaas/Scott Lash/Paul Morris (eds.), *Detraditionalization. Critical Reflections on Authority and Identity.* Oxford 1996.

[54] I restrict myself to some titles only: Richard A. Shweder/Robert A. LeVine (eds.), *Culture Theory. Essays on Mind, Self, and Emotion.* Cambridge 1984 (in the tradition of George Herbert Mead); Michael Carrither/Steven Collins/Steven Lukes, *The Category of the Person. Anthropology, Philosophy, History.* Cambridge 1985 (containing in translation the seminal article by Marcel Mauss "A Category of the

Doubts about the interpretation of 'New Age' as detraditionalization were lent additional credence when 'New Age' was linked to esotericism. Antoine Faivre presented 'esotericism' as an old philosophy of nature, having a long tradition, which originated in ancient culture, particularly in Alexandrian Hermetism and was handed down through Western culture to our own. Faivre conceived of it as a particular 'form of thought'[55] that sees correspondences between all of the parts of the universe. As Faivre writes: "It is the imagination that allows the use of these intermediaries, symbols and images to develop a gnosis, to penetrate the hieroglyphs of Nature, to put the theory of correspondences into active practice and to uncover, to see, and to know the mediating entities between Nature and the divine world."[56] The Dutch scholar Wouter Hanegraaff took the logical next step of identifying 'New Age' as an offshoot of that tradition.[57] What at first sight appeared to be a label subsuming rather diverse elements now displayed much more coherence: 'holism' was the guiding principle. This interpretation readily explained why 'New Age' had benefited from modern theoretical physics and biology in its conception of life and the cosmos as a system that, like a bicycle rider, has to keep restoring its balance. The principle of 'New Age' is this one: spirit is the dynamic of a system keeping itself alive, and matter and spirit cannot be separated.[58] Hanegraaff's

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Human Mind: The Notion of Person, the Notion of Self" (pp. 1-25); Hans G. Kippenberg/Yme B. Kuiper/Andy F. Sanders (eds.), *Concepts of Person in Religion and Thought.* Berlin/New York 1990; Louis Dumont, *Essais sur l'Individualisme. Une perspective anthropologique sur l'idéologie moderne.* Paris 1983; Albert Baumgarten (with Jan Assmann and Guy G. Stroumsa) (ed.), *Self, Soul and Body in Religious Experience.* Leiden 1998.

[55] Antoine Faivre, *Access to Western Esotericism.* New York 1994, pp. 10-15.

[56] Antoine Faivre, *Access to Western Esotericism* p. 12.

[57] Wouter J. Hanegraaff, *New Age Religion and Western Culture. Esotericism in the Mirror of Secular Thought.* Leiden 1996. "The term 'New Age Science' is actually a misnomer: its real domain is not natural science, but *philosophy of nature*" (p. 64).

[58] Hubert Knoblauch, " 'New Paradigm' oder 'Neues Zeitalter'? Fritjof Capras moralisches Unternehmen und die 'New-Age-Bewegung'," in: J. Bergmann/ A. Hahn/Th. Luckmann (eds.), *Religion und Kultur.* Opladen 1993, pp. 249-270.

approach allowed the various practices associated with 'New Age' to be seen as having unity. Take, for example, the distinction between disease and illness and between curing and healing. "Diseases are bio-physical conditions, and medical practitioners are concerned with curing these conditions. Illness, in contrast, has to do with the 'complex social, psychological, and spiritual condition of the sick person', and constitutes the proper domain of healing."[59] Illness is no longer attributed to mainly organic failure, which requires medical treatment. It is result of a mistaken understanding of one's own life. 'Difficult times' deserve a reflection, which relates the person and his or her body to cosmic life and rhythm again. When illness, divorce or unemployment are dealt with properly, they can be turned into stages of an 'authentic' life. 'Esotericism' in this sense has become part of the biography of people today.[60]

Inquiry into modern 'cults' confirms the conclusion we draw from 'fundamentalism'. Since the third and fourth decade of the twentieth century, the perception that religions continued to hold power in modern times had disappeared. If we replace 'fundamentalism' by Weber's 'sect', or 'New Age' by Buber's 'mysticism', we suddenly rediscover a theory assuming a significance of certain religious traditions for inhabitants of the modern world.

Disenchantment as a challenge to imagination

It is worth mentioning that Weber developed a model to explain the new career of religions in the modern age. It was part of a discovery that he made in 1911. At that time, according to his wife Marianne, Weber began a fresh, intense study of world religions. He discovered not only that the modern economic ethos had had its origin in religious belief, but that religious rationalism had permeated the entire fabric of Western culture. Weber's key term was 'disenchantment', which indicated the long historical process of rationalization that preceded

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[59] Wouter J. Hanegraaff, *New Age Religion and Western Culture* pp. 42-43.

[60] Cf. Horst Stenger, *Die soziale Konstruktion okkulter Wirklichkeit. Eine Soziologie des "New Age"*. Opladen 1993, pp. 139-245.

the modern age and had its origins in ancient religious belief. This development was fuelled by the problem of theodicee, which served to explain, justify, and even codify a permanent incongruence between fate and merit, and between fact and meaning.[61] As a consequence, the world was devalued — a precondition for a rational attitude to a world governed by its own laws and devoid of any inherent meaning.[62] Weber's discovery implied a reassessment of mysticism — a marginal phenomenon in his study of the Protestant ethos of capitalism which now assumed great importance. In describing her husband's discovery, Marianne Weber speaks of two trends fundamental to the history of mankind: "On the one hand, a rational control of the world and on the other hand, the mystical experience."[63] In Weber's own words (from his introduction to the "Economic Ethic of the World Religions"): "The unity of the primitive image of the world, in which everything was concrete magic, has tended to split into rational cognition and mastery of nature, on the one hand, and into 'mystic' experiences on the other. The inexpressible contents of such experiences remain the only possible 'beyond', added to the mechanism of a world robbed of Gods."[64] In 1913, Weber developed a systematic reconstruction of these trends, that was published posthumously by Marianne Weber as the chapter "Sociology of Religion" in *Economy and Society*. In this work, Weber sketched a universal historical drama leading to different principles for leading one's life. The process of the

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[61] These theodicees differed in their explanations. Weber regarded only three of them as rationally sufficient: the Indian doctrine of the transmigration of the soul, the Zoroastrian dualism, and the Protestant doctrine of predestination by a deus absconditus. Cf. Max Weber, *Die Wirtschaftsethik der Weltreligionen. Konfuzianismus und Taoismus* (1915-1920), ed. by H. Schmidt-Glintzer. MWG I/19. Tübingen 1989 pp. 246, 520-22; Max Weber, *The Sociology of Religion*. Translated by Ephraim Fischoff. Boston 1991, pp. 138-150.

[62] M. Weber, *Die Wirtschaftsethik der Weltreligionen. Konfuzianismus und Taoismus* p. 515.

[63] Marianne Weber, *Max Weber. Ein Lebensbild*. Tübingen 1926 pp. 348-349.

[64] Hans H. Gerth/C. Wright Mills, *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology*. Oxford 1946 p. 282.

world's 'disenchantment' was accelerated by prophets, by particular social classes and historical conditions, and by intellectuals. Weber's concept of 'disenchantment', often understood as a universal category of historical evolution, embeds an often overlooked theory of how religions are transformed in the modern world. This theory is as follows: "As intellectualism suppresses belief in magic, the world's processes become disenchanted, lose their magical significance, and henceforth simply 'are' and 'happen' but no longer signify anything. As a consequence, there is a growing demand that the world and the total pattern of life be subject to an order that is significant and meaningful."[65]

We are back, then, where we started: with the issue of imagination. Weber recognised the necessity to identify specific categories determining modern receptions of religious traditions. The significance of past religions has been deeply affected by the process of 'disenchantment'. Religious history has become a major source of meaning in a world increasingly regarded as devoid of it. Weber returned to the link between the world's 'disenchantment' and religiosity's new rise in a still fascinating public lecture, "Science as Profession", delivered in 1917 in Munich. In this lecture, Weber argued that even science is the product of religious history: it depends on a belief "that principally there are no mysterious incalculable forces that come into play, but rather that one can, in principle, master all things by calculation. This means that the world is disenchanted. One need no longer have recourse to magical means in order to master or implore the spirits, as did the savage, for whom such mysterious powers existed."[66] Weber pointed out that because of the dominance of a calculating attitude to the world, religions had definitely "retreated from public life: either into the transcendental realm of mystic life or into the brotherliness of direct and personal human relations."[67] Yet Weber's own words betray some doubt about the success of rationality. Indeed, the belief in

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[65] Max Weber, *The Sociology of Religion* p. 125.

[66] Hans H. Gerth/C. Wright Mills, *From Max Weber* p. 139.

[67] Hans H. Gerth/C. Wright Mills, *From Max Weber* p. 155.

controlling the world never entirely dominated scholarly or public discourse nor did it remain unchallenged. On the contrary, the careers of sects and of mysticism, of fundamentalism and New Age, of apocalyptic views of history and of esoteric conceptions of man and nature: all of these have relied on scientific and public discourse, rejecting too bold claims. Doubts are the thread that winds through the stories of fundamentalism and esotericism, and those of sects and mysticism. The experience of disenchantment has displaced religious history. We need revised concepts of 'history' and 'tradition' in order to understand the religious history of the past century.

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FROM HISTORICISM TO FUNCTIONALISM: THE RISE OF SCIENTIFIC APPROACHES TO RELIGIONS AROUND 1900 AND THEIR SOCIO-CULTURAL CONTEXT[1]

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Religion continues to be a subject of reflection within all advanced civilizations and especially in modern society. From a scientific-historical point of view, however, those discussions have to be distinguished from regular academic discourse. The science of religion arose within the formation of the modern scientific canon in the second half of the 19th century. Scientific religious research had been institutionalized by different disciplines, professorships, and institutes. It formed its own theories and schools and began to organize its discourses by special congresses as well as by its own publications. In this sense the history of the science of religion has already been subject to several examinations.[2] Attempts though to reconstruct the rise of scientific approaches to religions with regard to social and cultural development are more recent.[3] What were the reasons for the increased interest in scientific religious research? And, what was its cultural relevance? In the following, I will give a brief outline of some relations between the rise of scientific approaches to religions and their socio-cultural context by means of selected paradigms.

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[2] See, on behalf of others, E.J. Sharpe, *Comparative Religion. A History*, 2nd ed. La Salle 1986.

[3] See H.G. Kippenberg, *Die Entdeckung der Religionsgeschichte. Religionswissenschaft und Moderne*, Munich 1997, espec. 259ff.

1. The Experience of Development and Change

There have certainly been social and cultural shifts during all times and within all levels of civilization. The 19th century, however, represents an age of rapid change and simultaneously of intensified reflection to an extent that had been unknown so far. The reason for this is to be found in the technical-industrial progress and the enormous expansion of knowledge. Increasing development and change led to the discernment that culture is contingent and therefore caused a need for re-orientation.

The dynamic progression of social development had consequences on the mode of science as well as on its subjects. On the one hand, science turned to empiricism and began to reflect on its own temporality with the transition into the 19th century.[4] On the other hand, the scientific subjects themselves began to be examined from a historical point of view. This interest in history resulted in historicism.[5] History, however, had not only been relevant as a mere *reservoir* of facts. People wondered about the historical determinedness of their own situation. That is why history had to be able to explain the development as well as the origins of contemporary society and culture. These circumstances represent the basis for various evolutionary theories to emerge. They persistently determined the history of culture in general and the beginning of scientific religious research in particular.

Thus, the 19th century is not only marked by history that has been rediscovered and newly acquired after the Age of Enlightenment. It also represents the century of theories of origination. Scholars of various provenance strove for the knowledge of the historical genesis of different cultural phenomena. Within the cultural and social research the most favored subjects to this kind of perspective were: language(s), religion(s), the family, and, the legal and economical institutions. But that was not yet sufficient! History of culture should lead to

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[4] Cf. W. Lepenies, *Das Ende der Naturgeschichte. Wandel kultureller Selbstverständlichkeiten in den Wissenschaften des 18. und 19. Jahrhunderts*, Frankfurt a.M. 1978, 16ff.

[5] See F. Jaeger and J. Rüsen, *Geschichte des Historismus*, München 1992.

the reconstruction of a succession of those institutions. The highest concern was to answer the question: "What and where is the one origin of culture?"

The attempt to 'discover' the one historical origin of culture inevitably had to fail taking the linguistic findings of Johann Gottfried von Herder, Johann Georg Hamann, Wilhelm von Humboldt, Jacob Grimm and Lazar Geiger into account.[6] The absolute beginning of culture could not be reconstructed. Despite this discernment many scholars nevertheless tried to get as close as possible to the origin of culture. In this context the following scholars and treatises within the research on the historical origin of social institutions have to be mentioned: Henry Maine with *Ancient Law* (1861), Johann Jakob Bachofen with *Das Mutterrecht* (1861), and Lewis Henry Morgan with *Ancient Society* (1877). Approaches within the scope of economical historicism were — to a certain extent — also based on evolution-bound level theories, e.g., the works of Karl Lamprecht, Kurt Breysig, Georg von Below, Karl Bücher, and Eduard Meyer. However, evolutionary theories of origination were especially applied within research on religions.[7]

The genealogical method that tried to reconstruct the origin of culture had various scientific-historical roots, although Darwin's theory of evolution probably had the highest impact on its boom. Only a few years after the publication of *On the Origin of Species*[8] John F. McLennan developed his concept of culture-historical evolutionism: "In the sciences of law and society, old means not old in chronology, but in structure: that is the most archaic which lies nearest to the beginning of human progress considered as a development, and that which is most

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[6] Cf., e.g., H. Steinthal, *Der Ursprung der Sprache im Zusammenhange mit den letzten Fragen des Wissens*, 4th rev. ed. Berlin 1888, 359 et passim.

[7] In regard to the religious-historical evolutionism within the context of different paradigms in the science of religions about 1900, cf. H.G. Kippenberg, "Rivalry among Scholars of Religions. The Crisis of Historicism and the Formation of Paradigms in the History of Religions," in: *Historical Reflections/Relexions Historiques*, Vol. 20, 1994, No. 3, 377-402.

[8] Ch. Darwin, *On the Origin of Species by means of Natural Selection, or the Preservation of Favoured Races in the Struggle for Life*, London 1859.

modern which is farthest removed from that beginning."[9] Edward Burnett Tylor then was the first to take an evolutionary concept as a basis for the history of religions.[10] Although taking note of Darwin's theory of evolution, he did not directly refer to it. Within his two volumes of *Primitive Culture* from 1871 Tylor unfolded the theory of animism. With this concept he claimed to have discovered the proper clue to the genesis of religion.

As far as methodology is concerned, the various empirical data had to be classified and put into a coherent sequence. Tylor applied both these methods to the history of culture. His approach therefore is an example of giving up spatially conceived classification systems in favor of temporalization of the complex data.[11] He repeatedly draws a comparison with methods of the natural sciences, e.g., botany and zoology. He also reflects on the heuristic status of the theory of evolution. Tylor identifies an open question within the natural sciences, namely "whether a theory of development from species to species is a record of transitions which actually took place, or a mere ideal scheme serviceable in the classification of species whose origin was really independent."[12] This uncertainty, however, would not be valid for the subject of ethnology, as "for development in culture is recognized by our most familiar knowledge."[13] Industrial progress, for instance, would give granting examples for an *evident* history of evolution.[14] In this context Tylor specifies a class of facts that he calls "survivals." Survivals are those phenomena "which have been carried on by force of habit into a new state of society different from that in which they had their

[9] J.F. McLennan, *Primitive Marriage. An Inquiry into the Origin of the Form of Capture in Marriage Ceremonies*, Chicago 1970 (orig. 1865), 6.

[10] Cf. Edward B. Tylor, *Primitive Culture. Researches into the Development of Mythology, Philosophy, Religion, Language, Art, and Custom*, 2 Vol., London 1871; in the following I will use the 4th edition dating from 1903.

[11] See for the history of science in general Lepenies, op. cit., 18f.

[12] Tylor, op. cit., 14.

[13] Ibid., 15.

[14] "Such examples of progression are known to us as direct history" (ibid., 15).

original home."[15] They could be accepted as a proof and examples of an older condition of culture from which a new one has developed. At the same time evolution could not always be considered as an absolute and unilinear progress. "Progress, degradation, survival, revival, modification, are all modes of the connexion that binds together the complex network of civilisation."[16] According to Tylor, only from an ideational point of view the process of civilization leads to a higher organization of the individual and the society. Just at the end of this process the cultural ideals of humanity are put into effect.[17] Within reality cultural evolution covers progression as well as degeneration.[18] Evolutionism therefore has to be confined to the possibility of deducing an advanced cultural condition from an earlier one. Only causative-genetic conclusions are permitted. The presumption of a *causa finalis* is not part of the evolutionary concept bound to empirical knowledge.

As far as origin and development of religion are concerned, Tylor does not consider it to be impossible that there might have been a cultural condition without any religion at all. This state, however, — comparable to the presumption of a culture without language — could not be inferred from empirical data. Defining religion as the belief in Spiritual Beings, Tylor denies that there are any primitive civilizations without religion at present.[19] He calls this elementary mode of religion "animism". It would not necessarily have to include the belief in a supreme godhead, worshipping to idols, or the practice of certain rites. Rather, it would represent the basis for the development of further religious stages.

Unlike Tylor, Herbert Spencer applied Darwin's theory of evolution explicitly to the social sphere. He thereby promoted its propagation and popularization on other human, cultural, and social scientific

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[15] Ibid., 16.

[16] Cf. op. cit., 17.

[17] Cf. op. cit., 27.

[18] Also Kippenberg refers to this fact, cf. "Rivalry among Scholars of Religions," 379f.

[19] Cf. Tylor, op. cit., 424.

discourses. Spencer first cites ethnological proofs of the opinion "that civilized men have no innate tendency to form religious ideas."[20] From the ethnological data he draws the conclusion "that they have a natural origin."[21] Differing from Tylor, he determines that ancestor worship (respectively the "ghost-propitiation") is "the origin of all religions"[22] — as already stated within the first part of his *Sociology*. This practice would have developed to become "fetishism" (respectively totemism) in the course of the history of religions.[23] During this process, all of the gods would have originated in apotheosis: "Originally, the god is the superior living man whose power is conceived as superhuman."[24] Conclusively, Spencer states that "Comparative Sociology discloses a common origin for each leading element of religious belief. The conception of the ghost, along with the multiplying and complicating ideas arising from it, we find everywhere [. . .]. Thus, we have abundant proofs of the natural genesis of religions."[25] In addition, the "ghost-theory" would be able to explain "the genesis of the priestly function, and the original union of it with the governing function,"[26] as well as the formation of ecclesiastical institutions on the whole.[27]

Furthermore, there are other concepts to be mentioned that are also based on premises derived from the theory of evolution. Robert Ranulph Marett, a scholar of Tylor, for instance, considered the imagination of a general animation, or pregnancy with the power of natural objects and persons to be the original religious stage. This level that he called pre-animism preceded the period of animism.[28] Marett felt compelled to this conclusion by the reports of voyagers and mission-

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[20] H. Spencer, *The Principles of Sociology*, Vol. III, London et al. 1897, 4.

[21] Ibid., 5.

[22] Ibid., 7.

[23] Cf. op. cit., 14ff.

[24] Ibid., 19.

[25] Ibid., 21.

[26] Ibid., 60.

[27] Cf. op. cit., 61ff.

[28] See R.R. Marett, "Pre-animistic Religion (1900)," in: id., *The Threshold of Religion*, New York 1909, 1-28.

aries to the South Sea about the idea of mana and taboos in Polynesian societies. The great work of James George Frazer was also influenced by evolutionism. His concept followed the ideas of McLennan. Frazer first published *The Golden Bough. A Study in Comparative Religion* in two volumes (1890), then in three volumes (1900) and finally in twelve volumes (1911-1915) with the third edition.

Evolutionary theories of this kind have been modified by later scholars of the science of religion, but not totally rejected. Their emergence may be explained by the experience that social and cultural institutions change rapidly. However, this does not answer the question why religion is of such prominence within those theories. This fact may be explained against the background of reflections on "the problem of social order."

2.   The Problem of Social Order

The experience of the French Revolution and succeeding political upheavals as well as the discernment of the social processes of differentiation raised the question of social coherence. The search for societal forces of integration emphasized religion in both its moral and social significance.

2.1.   The Conservative Reaction to Revolution and Revolt

The ancient societal order had frequently been subject to criticism within the 18th century, though criticism had never caused any public counterargumentation. A conservative reaction only had been formed at the time of political upheavals in Europe from 1789 onwards. The consequences of the French Revolution led to the question of the "social order" ("l'ordre social"), and that topic pointed towards religion. Edward Burke was one of the first to refer to the significance of a religious basis of society in his *Reflections on the Revolution in France* from 1790. His argumentation then was followed up by both of the French counter-revolutionaries Joseph de Maistre and Louis Gabriel Ambroise de Bonald. They were concerned about re-establishing the unity of politics and religion, of "throne and altar." Religion was considered to be the 'social bond' that has a governing and a domesticat-

ing function.[29] In his work *Du Pape* from 1819 de Maistre conceived the papal infallibility analogously to secular-monarchical sovereignty. The religious function of societal order and integration was even more emphasized by de Bonald.[30] The initial source of his social and religious philosophy is the maxim: "Everything that is useful to maintain the society is necessary; everything that is necessary is a truth [. . .]."[31] In order to be able to live within a free and reasonable society people would need a "common reference" which is represented in God. Thus, the existence of God is a requirement for society. Religion is the societal condition as such. Simultaneously society is the condition of God's presence.[32] This "functional" definition of religion does not mean that society invents the existence of God. The idea of God rather proves its evidence by means of its impact on society. The presence of God is necessary for the maintenance of human society. At the same time God's presence cannot be realized by itself, but requires society. It has to be understood as a continuous process in which society constitutes itself.[33]

Development was a central issue within the works of all three philosophers of the counter-revolution. However, they did not refer to it in the sense of progress, as it was understood during the Age of Enlightenment. For them, development was conceived out of consideration for traditions and customs.

2.2. Consequences on Conceptualizing Religion

2.2.1. Religion and Morality

One of the most essential impacts of religion, as outlined above, was the close relationship between religion and morality. Morality and

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[29] Cf. H. Tyrell, "Von der 'Soziologie *statt* Religion' zur Religionssoziologie," in: V. Krech and H. Tyrell (Hg.), *Religionssoziologie um 1900*, Würzburg 1995, 79-127, 84.

[30] See for the following: R. Spaemann, *Der Ursprung der Soziologie aus dem Geist der Restauration. Studien über L.G.A. de Bonald*, Munich 1959, 115-125.

[31] Quoted after Spaemann, op. cit., 115.

[32] Cf. Spaemann, op. cit., 117.

[33] Cf. op. cit., 118.

ethics were taken as public topics within Europe as well as in the USA during the 19th century. Against the background of growing social tensions, social problems quickly resulted in intensified scientific reflections on moral and ethical issues. There was an increasing interest in morality as an empirical subject in the natural sciences which is especially remarkable in Germany.[34] Morality was also examined in a philosophical perspective. Within Neo-Kantianism, as from the end of the 1870ies, problems of the practical philosophy were increasingly dealt with.[35] The discourse about morality, however, corresponded with religious aspects, too.

In continuity with the philosophy of Kant, the Neo-Kantianism of Marburg's provenance postulated a close correlation between religion and morality. Philosophers of the Marburg School, namely Paul Natorp and Hermann Cohen, enforced this connection. According to Natorp's opinion the moral sphere is the core of religion. Religion is directly derived from the core of the moral consciousness. It keeps its coherence at every stage without becoming identical with it.[36] Natorp develops this argument in a social-educational context. Here morality and religion are considered to be of a direct social nature. This argument is closely linked to Auguste Comte's "religion of humanity" and somehow anticipates Emile Durkheim's concept of the similarity between God and society. Natorp continues to express the view that religion "becomes an affair of the community to such an extent that the notion of God almost is only the expression of the highest stage of human consciousness. But at this stage the unity of mankind is connected to *the ideational notion of man.*"[37] The early Hermann Cohen even goes

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[34] See H. Treiber, "Zur Genealogie einer 'Science Positive De La Morale En Allemagne': Die Geburt der 'r(é)ealistischen Moralwissenschaft' aus der Idee einer monistischen Naturkonzeption," in: *Nietzsche-Studien* 22, 1993, 165-221.

[35] See K. Ch. Köhnke, *Entstehung und Aufstieg des Neukantianismus. Die deutsche Universitätsphilosophie zwischen Idealismus und Positivismus*, Frankfurt a.M. 1986, 404ff.

[36] Cf. P. Natorp, *Religion innerhalb der Grenzen der Humanität. Ein Kapitel zur Grundlegung der Sozialpädagogik*, Freiburg i.Br. 1894, 15.

[37] Ibid.

a step further: Religious doctrines inevitably would lead to the particularism of religions. In order to realize the intended universalism, religion has to comprehend itself as being totally identical with ethics. In his treatise *Ethik des reinen Willens* from 1904, Cohen argues that "religion could merely have allness of mankind for its veritable aim, only if it gives up all of its other problems and matters of faith, i.e., if it takes solely morality as its true subject. Thus, religion is not interested in the so-called faith any more, and therefore it is to be wrapped up in ethics."[38]

2.2.2. Religion as an Affair of the Community

The close correlation between religion and morality not least had consequences on the ethnologically and sociologically oriented science of religion. Ethnology and ethnographic sociology investigated the function of religion for the community or society especially by means of religious rituals. Within this context sacrificial practices were one of the most discussed topics around 1900. William Robertson Smith stated that rituals were of priority in regard to myths. His argument had a high impact on contemporary theories of sacrifice. Smith's theory serves as an excellent example of the moral notion of religion as a societal function. For him, religion is "the affair of the community rather than of the individual."[39] In ancient times, religious practices "did not exist for the saving of souls but for the preservation and welfare of society."[40] Religion "is not an arbitrary relation of the individual man to a supernatural power, it is a relation of all the members of a community to a power that has the god of the community at heart, and protects its law and moral order."[41] In this perspective the close correlation between religion and ethics is a natural consequence: "In ancient society ... the religious ideal expressed in the act of social worship and

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[38] H. Cohen, *System der Philosophie*. 2nd part: *Ethik des reinen Willens*, 3rd ed. Berlin 1921, 61f.

[39] W. Robertson Smith, *Lectures on the Religion of the Semites*, First Series: The Fundamental Institutions, new ed. London 1894, 253f.; see also 258, 263 et pass.

[40] Ibid., 29.

[41] Ibid., 55.

the ethical ideal which governed the conduct of daily life were wholly at one, and all morality — as morality was then understood — was consecrated and enforced by religious motives and sanctions."[42]

Religion and morality also were closely related within the thinking of Emile Durkheim. He developed his theory of religion against a Kantian background, as did the Neo-Kantians. Durkheim referred to Robertson Smith's[43] understanding of religion as a fundamental symbolical expression of morality.[44] The close correlation between religion and morality led to the equation of God and society. According to Durkheim the Godhead is nothing else but the symbolical expression of collectivity, "la société transfigurée et pensée symboliquement."[45] In his main work on religion Durkheim puts it like this: "Religion ceases to be an inexplicable hallucination and takes a foothold in reality. In fact, we can say that the believer is not deceived when he believes in the existence of a moral power upon which he depends and from which he receives all the best in himself: this power exists, it is society."[46]

Though Durkheim continued the theory of totemism in his *Elementary Forms of the Religious Life*, he was less interested in evolutionism and the *history* of religions. He was more concerned with social anthropology as a functional approach.[47] Essentially his leading interest was a contemporary one. He drew analogies between the elementary forms of religion and secular morality in order to replace religion with

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[42] Ibid., 267.

[43] Cf. St. Lukes, *Emile Durkheim. His Life and Work: A Historical and Critical Study*, London 1973, 237ff. and 450f.

[44] See H. Firsching, *Moral und Gesellschaft. Zur Soziologisierung des ethischen Diskurses in der Moderne*, Frankfurt a.M. and New York 1994, 48-55. In regard to the influence of Robertson Smith on Durkheim cf. R.A. Jones, "Durkheim, Frazer, and Smith: The Role of Analogies and Exemplars in the Development of Durkheim's Sociology of Religion," in: *American Journal of Sociology* 92, 1986, 596-627.

[45] E. Durkheim, "Détermination du fait moral," in: id., *Sociologie et philosophie*, 4th ed. Vendôme 1974, 51-83, cit.: 71.

[46] E. Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life*. Translated from the French by J. Ward Swain, New York 1965 (french orig. 1912), 257.

[47] Cf. Lukes, op. cit., 456f.

'laic morality'. For Durkheim, laic morality serves as an equivalent of religion, because it consists of collective ideals that have always been of sacral nature. Here the idea of humanity, or the "cult of the individual" may be mentioned.[48] Laic morality takes the place of traditional religions with their particular dogmas. The religion of humanity "is a religion of which man is, at the same time, both believer and god."[49] It secures the obligatory morality of society and thus guarantees maintenance of the social order.[50]

3. The Problem of Personality

3.1. *Kulturpessimismus*, Culture of Personality, and Individual Religiosity

In several discourses around 1900 the societal public discussed the religious situation and the future of religion. The background of this discussion is represented by the Christian popular churches' decrease of societal and cultural influence on the one hand. On the other, and especially within the German context, the discourse was influenced by the criticism of the 'soulless process of modernization' and by the demand for a 'culture of personality'.

Although a decrease of significance of the Christian Churches and an intellectual farewell to the Christian doctrines can be stated around 1900, religion had not totally vanished from the societal sphere. On the contrary, a large, mostly newly emerging variety of religious forms is to be noted within Western industrialized societies.[51] Extra-ecclesiastical — secular, transformed or new — manifestations of

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[48] Cf. E. Durkheim, "Individualism and the Intellectuals," in: W.S.F. Pickering, *Durkheim on Religion. A Selection of Readings with Bibliographies*, London and Boston 1975, 59-73.

[49] Ibid., 62.

[50] That is why Robert N. Bellah calls Durkheim "the high priest and theologian of the civil religion of the Third Republic" ("Introduction," in: R.N. Bellah, ed., *Emile Durkheim on Morality and Society. Selected Writings*, Chicago and London 1973, IX-LV, cit.: X).

[51] See Th. Nipperdey, *Deutsche Geschichte 1866-1918*, Vol. I, Munich 1990, 428-530.

religion were increasing. These forms of religion transcended profane spheres, such as work, family, politics, education,[52] and art. They could reach up to a diffuse-religious or spiritual mood within the bourgeois environment that Thomas Nipperdey denotes as "vagierende Religiosität" (fuzzy religiosity).[53] Nipperdey considers these forms of religion as an "answer to the mood of crisis at those times, to the loss of reliability through modernization, to the doubts of the established certainty, to the endangering of personality and the culture of autonomy by means of the 'iron cages' of modern civilization."[54] The evidence of extra-ecclesiastical religious phenomena lead to the conclusion that "the decay of the commitment to the church [...] has not yet taken away the power of the religious shaping of life."[55] Especially the intellectual bourgeois environment is characterized by this ambivalent attitude towards religion. "Despite of their relative distance to the church the *Bildungsbürgertum* during the 19th century mainly saw itself being religious"[56] — a fact that is only to be understood on the basis of the distinction between 'objective religion' and 'subjective religiosity'.[57] Contents and institutions of traditional religion became more and more obsolete. At the same time the *bourgeoisie* remained religious, for it always criticized religion only in aspects of certain doctrines and dogmatic systems, but never the religious conviction as such.[58]

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[52] See W. Ernst, "Zum Problem der modernen Bildungsreligion," in: *Religion und Geisteskultur* 8, 1914, 20-31.

[53] Cf. Nipperdey, op. cit., 521.

[54] Ibid., 527.

[55] Ibid., 528.

[56] Cf. L. Hölscher, "Die Religion des Bürgers. Bürgerliche Frömmigkeit und protestantische Kirche im 19. Jahrhundert," in: *Historische Zeitschrift* 250, 1990, 595-627, 615.

[57] Ibid., 617.

[58] Cf. op. cit., 623.

Beyond its institutionalized forms religion was considered to be of "a great societal power."[59] According to Max Maurenbrecher, for example, there is no doubt that the search and the need for religion has grown stronger around 1900.[60] There would be a desire for an idea that is worth-while offering sacrifices for and suffering deprivations. Even those people that could not hold on to the traditional religion any more, people that would be saturated with Darwinism and evolutionism in all fields, i.e., those that Maurenbrecher refers to as intellectuals, would cry for sentiments of future, for hope, yearning, and faith.[61] Georg Simmel's examination of the religious situation around 1900 results in the diagnosis that religious need has survived its fulfillment.[62] Beyond the institutionalized objective religion he identifies the subjective religiosity as being a function of life itself.[63]

The future of religion was discussed — among other trends and at least in the German public — within the context of the *ex post facto* called *Kulturpessimismus*.[64] "The enthusiasm and the self-glorification that we have experienced in regard to the enormous scientific-technical, mechanical, and industrial development until recently, now start to considerably fade away. Now and then they are even transformed into a gloomy pessimism. [. . .] The discomfort of technical attainments that had been admired until recently, spread over wide sections of society, and most modern sensing spirits now tend to radically deny their

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[59] Cf. W. Beyschlag, "Die Religion und die moderne Gesellschaft," in: *Deutsche Revue über das gesamte nationale Leben der Gegenwart* XI, 1886, 75-83, 173-183, cit.: 75.

[60] Cf. M. Maurenbrecher, "Das religiöse Problem der Gegenwart," in: *Preußische Jahrbücher* 115, 1904, 250-275, 250.

[61] Cf. op. cit., 251.

[62] Cf. G. Simmel, *Philosophie des Geldes* (Gesamtausgabe Vol. 6), Frankfurt a.M. 1989 (orig. 1900), 491.

[63] Cf. G. Simmel, "Das Problem der religiösen Lage" (1911), in: *Gesamtausgabe*, Vol. 14, Frankfurt a.M. 1996, 367-384.

[64] See S. Kalberg, "The Origin and Expansion of *Kulturpessimismus*: The Relationsship between public and private Spheres in early Twentieth Century Germany," in: *Sociological Theory* 5, 1987, 150-165.

cultural value."[65] As a reaction towards a technology that has become an end in itself "a promising religious-moral process of revival of man himself" would emerge.[66] Such a cultural revival, however, could not be initiated externally. It would rather have to be initiated by the religious need to conceive existence as a unity. Culture for the purpose of "self-presentation of the soul" would be threatened in its persistence, if split in special subcultures becoming an end in themselves. In order to have an effect against this development, "faith in man and in his inward sanctity" should be mobilized. "In this regard, religion has to be considered as life out of the basic source of all existence, as the unitary reason of our personality, and the source of culture."[67]

These quotations give an example of the attitude towards culture that no longer accepts any relevance of objective religion for the entire society. Since the unity of society and the faith in progress had become obsolete within reflections on modernity,[68] religion gained broad significance at the individual level. Personality, but not society as a whole, now served as a point of reference to numerous religious concepts. This view was followed up, for instance, by the works of Ernst Troeltsch, Georg Simmel, and Rudolph Eucken. These scholars considered religion to be a function that is constitutive of personality. Although the individual would be a prerequisite for society, it could not be sociologically defined. Georg Simmel states that the notion of the individual is probably indissoluble. Thus, it could not be subject to cognition, but only to experience.[69] Corresponding to such a concept of individ-

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[65] K. König, "Das Kulturproblem und die Religion," in: *Die Grenzboten* II, 1910, 151-162, 152. In this context the author quotes Werner Sombart as a "most unsuspected witness" of such attitude (cf. p. 153).

[66] Cf. op. cit., 155.

[67] Ibid., 162.

[68] Cf. O. Rammstedt, "Zweifel am Fortschritt und Hoffen aufs Individuum. Zur Konstitution der modernen Soziologie im ausgehenden 19. Jahrhundert," in: *Soziale Welt* 36, 1985, 483-502.

[69] Cf. G. Simmel, *Grundfragen der Soziologie (Individuum und Gesellschaft)*, 4th ed. Berlin 1984, (Original 1917), 8f.

uality, religion primarily was placed within the psychic sphere.[70] According to Hermann Siebeck the subject of philosophy of religion consists in proving that the origin and legitimacy of the religious problem primarily descends from the historical development of a specific consciousness. The nature and significance of this consciousness would then have to be described: on the one hand, with regard to its relation to the nature and value of personality; on the other hand, with regard to its relation to culture.[71] This kind of conceptualizing religion corresponded to the arising psychology of religion.

3.2. Religion as an Affair of the Psyche

Friedrich Schleiermacher was the most important precursor of psychology of religion. Therefore, the forum for its discourse was within the field of philosophy and theology. At first it started to be established as an empirical science within the USA about the end of the 19th century. The works of Edwin Diller Starbuck,[72] William James[73] and James Henry Leuba[74] have specifically to be mentioned. Starbuck worked with the assistance of a questionnaire-method in order to attain 'religious facts'. James evaluated self-testimonies of 'religious genius people'. Leuba referred to results of questionnaires and interviews as well as to ethnological literature. In 1904 Stanley Hall began to edit the *American Journal of Religious Psychology and Education* (since 1911: *Journal of Religious Psychology*).

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[70] Cf. W. Dilthey, "Das Problem der Religion" (1911), in: *Gesammelte Schriften*, Vol. 6, Leipzig and Berlin 1924, 288-305, 304.

[71] Cf. H. Siebeck, *Lehrbuch der Religionsphilosophie*, Freiburg i.Br. and Leipzig 1893, 12.

[72] E.D. Starbuck, *The Psychology of Religion: An Empirical Study of the Growth of Religious Consciousness*, with a preface by W. James, London 1899.

[73] W. James, *The Will to Believe, and Other Essays in Popular Philosophy*, New York and London 1897; id., *The Varieties of Religious Experience. A Study in Human Nature*, New York and London 1902.

[74] J.H. Leuba, *The Psychological Origin and the Nature of Religion*, London 1909; id., *A Psychological Study of Religion, its Origin, Function, and Future*, New York 1912.

Also in Germany several scholars placed the psychological approach within the field of religious research before the turn of the century.[75] The Anglo-Saxon religious-psychological works soon were adopted.[76] In 1899 a German translation of James' religious-psychological essays with an explanation written by Friedrich Paulsen was published. In 1907 the *Varieties of Religious Experience* followed in German language, translated by Georg Wobbermin, and Starbuck's *Psychology of Religion* was rendered into German in 1909. Though psychology of religion first started with examining pathological phenomena,[77] it soon played an important part within theological discussions.[78] However, it also spread far beyond the boundaries of theology. Psychology of religion was established as a discipline in its own right. It was concerned with religious phenomena in general from a psychological point of view, and it reached a considerable academic response. Psychology of religion was confined to an empirical science, depending on the scholar's point of view. Ernst Troeltsch, for instance, sees specific tasks for the psychology of religion within the science of religion. These tasks include examining the "particular characteristic features" of religious phenomena,[79] or "the phenomenon in its actu-

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[75] See O. Ziemssen, *Die Religion im Lichte der Psychologie*, Gotha 1880; E. Koch, *Die Psychologie in der Religionswissenschaft*, Leipzig 1896.

[76] Cf. K. Bornhausen, "Amerikanische Religionspsychologie in Deutschland," in: *Die Christliche Welt. Evangelisches Gemeindeblatt für Gebildete aller Stände* 23, No. 42, 1909, 992-995; G. Wobbermin, "Zur religionspsychologischen Arbeit des Auslands," in: *Religion und Geisteskultur* 4, 1910, 233-247.

[77] Cf., e.g., H. Werner, *Der religiöse Wahnsinn*, Stuttgart 1890; Th. Braun, *Die Religiöse Wahnbildung*, Tübingen 1906; J. Bresler, *Religionshygiene*, Halle a.S. 1907; Th. Achelis, "Anomalien der religiösen Entwicklung," in: *Zeitschrift für Sozialwissenschaft* VI, 1903, 491-514.

[78] On the theological reception of the psychology of religion, cf. despite numerous others: Georg Wobbermin, *Systematische Theologie nach religionspsychologischer Methode*, 3 Vol., Leipzig 1913-1925.

[79] Cf. E. Troeltsch, *Zur religiösen Lage, Religionsphilosophie und Ethik*. (Gesammelte Schriften II) 2. Aufl. Tübingen 1922, 489.

ality and factual peculiarity."[80] Psychology of religion, however, was sometimes used in order to recognize the "essence of religion" beyond its empirical variety.[81] The question of truth, however, was usually excluded from research in order to restrict the research to the empirical level.[82]

4. Paradigms of Religious Research around 1900

4.1. Religious Research as History of Religious Evolution

The common horizon of the different approaches to religious research consisted of the task of examining the dynamics of social and cultural development. This horizon of problems strengthened the consciousness of the historical contingency of the present situation. Therefore, science of religion started out as history of religion. The historical orientation was due to the realization that societal institutions, thus religion, too, could only be conceived in their historical contexts. The underlying interest beyond that historical research, however, was the attempt to understand one's own societal and cultural situation in its genesis.

It was not sufficient only to arrange historical facts as such, as the present had to be contextualized with regard to the past. The evolutionism put forward a paradigm that permitted setting up laws of development. Thus, it was possible to relate older "stages" within the history of religions and culture to advanced levels of civilization and finally to contemporary society. Scholars of evolutionism were especially able to put different stages in a sequence.

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[80] Ibid., 492. In order to locate the psychology of religion within the discipline of religious research, cf. his treatise *Psychologie und Erkenntnistheorie in der Religionswissenschaft. Eine Untersuchung über die Bedeutung der Kantischen Religionslehre für die heutige Religionswissenschaft*, Tübingen 1905.

[81] See, e.g., E.W. Mayer, *Das psychologische Wesen der Religion und die Religionen*, Straßburg 1906.

[82] Cf., e.g., W. Stählin and K. Koffka, "Zur Einführung," in: *Archiv für Religionspsychologie* 1, 1914, 7, and G. Wunderle, "Aufgaben und Methoden der modernen Religionspsychologie," in: *Philosophisches Jahrbuch* 27, 1914, 29-154.

4.2. From Evolutionism to Functionalism

At the same time the interest in elaborating elementary forms of religions arose. This interest was a result of the 'problem of social order' and thus combined the evolutionary history of religion with ethnology and sociology of religion. The evolutionism therefore represents the bond that unified historical approaches with functional ones within the science of religion. This connection finally led to the Durkheimian sociology of religion.

Ethnological and sociological functionalism stated that religions refer to the unity of communities or societies, respectively. The contemporary individual need for religion in the form of bourgeois religiosity, however, hampered the (sole) understanding of religion as a common affair, and psychology of religion was formed against this background. The psychological approach somehow served as an equivalent substitute for the ethnological and sociological functionalism, because it also was interested in elaborating invariant structures based on the empirical data — thus primarily not in regard to the social order, but to the individual psyche and the constitution of personality.

4.3. History, Sociology, and Psychology

From a scientific-historical point of view these three paradigms outlined above, can be placed into a kind of sequential relation. However, they were not necessarily incompatible, but could also be combined with each other. One of the main conditions for a connection existed in the differentiation between objective religion and subjective religiosity.[83] Rudolph Schultze, for instance, draws a distinction between religion as an "*objective relation*," as a "historical subject" besides other institutions such as the state, society, science, technology, and art on the one hand, and piety respectively religiosity as a "*subjective behavior*," a psychological phenomenon on the other hand.[84]

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[83] On the concise differentiation, cf. Siebeck, op. cit., 264.

[84] Cf. R. Schultze, "Die Religion. Ein (sic!) philosophische Skizze," in: *Zeitschrift für Missionskunde und Religionswissenschaft* XVI, 1901, 257-261, 289-305, 335-338, 358-365, cit.: 257.

Within the works of other authors the distinction is based on the duality of individual and community. Whereas religion of the individual could be denoted as subjective religion, the religion of the community would represent the objective form.[85] Besides the explicit differentiation of both notions of religion the distinction was implicitly carried on while asking for the origin or the genesis of religion, respectively. This question was often considered to be part of determining the religious essence.[86] Around 1900 it permanently was differentiated between the objective origin of religion, either the historical, or the transcendental-metaphysical one, and the psychological source.[87] Whereas the psychological approach presumed the notion of subjective religiosity, the historical and the metaphysical investigation into the origin of religion was based on the notion of objective religion. According to the religious-historical method, religion was considered to be "an empirically given object." The historical approach would examine the various religions, compared them with regard to its similarity and dissimilarity and thus tried to emerge a common notion that desires to denote the essence of religion.[88] Correspondingly the essence of religion was determined by "the sum of those characteristics that the historical religions have in common."[89] In the opinion of several authors the historical method would have to be completed by other approaches in order to be able to determine the essence of religion entirely. In relation to this argument the difference between objective and subjective religion

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[85] Cf., e.g., M. Christlieb, "Individualismus und Religion," in: *Wartburgstimmen. Halbmonatsschrift für das religiöse, künstlerische und philosophische Leben des deutschen Volkstums und die staatspädagogische Kultur der germanischen Völker* II, 1904, Vol. 1, No. 9, 562-569, 565.

[86] Cf. M. Schulze, "Ursprung und Wesen der Religion," in: *Deutsch-evangelische Blätter. Zeitschrift für den gesamten Bereich des deutschen Protestantismus* XXXI, 1906, 145-157.

[87] Cf., e.g., Schultze, op. cit., 258ff. and 289.

[88] Cf. A. Dorner, "Über das Wesen der Religion," in: *Theologische Studien und Kritiken* 56, 1883, 217-277, 271f.

[89] J. Kaftan, *Das Wesen der christlichen Religion*, Basel 1881, 5.

then was discussed. August Dorner, for instance, defines that "even if one only proceeded from the given fact and then tried to understand the essence of religion by comparison of the empirically given religions, it would, however, be completely one-sided to end with the historical religion having become objective and to approve only objective religion and religious community. Here, one aspect is missing that is essential to all religions, namely that religion does not only develop within community, but within individuals, too."[90] To complete the historical method the author suggests the psychological approach, since it follows up the course of the religious process within the individuals.[91] Whereas religion in its historical perspective appears as "objective religion," as external revelation and religious community,[92] it is, within a psychological perspective, understood as "subjective religion," as a "receptive behavior that is based everywhere on the relation of total dependency."[93] Emil W. Mayer considers the same differentiation to be a peculiarity that is characteristic for the methodology of the present. For him, it is not only the historical objective religion that is examined. At the same time it would be the individual religiosity that is anxiously investigated also, in order to comprehend the essence of religion. The historical procedure should always be completed by the psychological method, and vice versa.[94]

I want to conclude that the historization and empirization within scientific religious research was influenced by the question of one's own present. These circumstances paradoxically led to the need to

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[90] Dorner, op. cit., 218.

[91] Cf. op. cit., 218. Both methods would have to be completed by the speculative-genetic method, since neither the psychological, nor the historical perspective could be able to conceive the concrete and various elements of the single religions.

[92] Cf. ibid., 276.

[93] Ibid., 275. Here the influence of Schleiermacher's notion of religion is very significant.

[94] Cf. E.W. Mayer, "Zum Stand der Frage nach dem Wesen der Religion," in: *Theologische Rundschau* 13, 1910, 1-15, 45-63, espec.: 5f. See also H. Maier, *Psychologie des emotionalen Denkens*, Tübingen 1908. Maier speeks of a "religious-historically orientated work of the psychologist" (p. 507).

look for invariant and elementary regularities. Thus, the research based on historical facts altered to functional approaches that set up laws of origin and structure. According to the specific paradigm general laws and invariant structures of religion were related either to society, to the individual, or to the balance between both. Hereby priority was either given to society while placing the individual behind, or the individual experience was considered to be the initial source of religion. Accordingly, religion was either conceived as action, or as experience. In any case, however, science of religion was part of those reflections on modernization that picked out the relation between the individual and society as a central theme.

History of science may sharpen the sensitivity towards transformation processes as they can be described during the transition from history of religion to functionalism. However, they cannot be avoided as the human impulse of orientation and structuring that also shapes science is too strong.[95] In addition, it should not be neglected that theory formation in general and the history of religion in particular come within the purview of aesthetic criteria.[96] As every theorizing is dependent on its contemporary context most of the old theories of religion today have become obsolete. But the leading questions, such as: "In which kind of relation are religion and modernity to each other?" and: "What is the contribution of religion to balance the possibly opposed requirements of the individual and society?", remain relevant until today.

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[95] Cf. contemporary examples within the science of religion that are either subject to fashion, as the concept of civil religion, or the research on esoteric forms of religion.

[96] Cf. A. Michaels, "Einleitung," in: id., *Klassiker der Religionswissenschaft*, Munich 1997, 7-16, 15, and Kippenberg, *Die Entdeckung der Religionsgeschichte*, op. cit., 262.

FUNDAMENTALISM AND THE RESURGENCE OF RELIGION

Martin Riesebrodt

The dramatic global resurgence of religious movements since the 1970s has caught most scholars of religion by surprise. For most of us, such revitalization of religion was not considered possible since the fate of religion in the modern world was to be one of an irreversible trend toward secularization and privatization. According to our Western myth of modernization, the future of religion offered several options, but neither its resurgence as a political force and marker of social identity, nor its ability to shape human beings according to its own ethos, were among them.[1]

For intellectuals trained in Western academia it was particularly disturbing that these resurgent religious movements were not culturally or politically "progressive," like the Latin American liberation theology with its fusion of Marxism and Christianity. To the contrary, most of these religious movements were either aggressively nationalistic or "fundamentalist" with a strong emphasis on patriarchal authority and morality or both.[2] Equally irritating was the fact that by joining these

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[1] For a survey of different positions on secularization see Martin Riesebrodt and Mary Ellen Konieczny: "Sociology of Religion," in John Hinnells (ed.), *Penguin Companion to the Study of Religion*. Forthcoming. For the ongoing debate see *The Secularization Debate*, ed. by William H. Swatos, Jr. (Special Issue of *Sociology of Religion*) Vol. 60, no. 3, Fall 1999.

[2] Not all ethno-nationalistic movements are fundamentalist and vice versa, but they can merge under certain circumstances. See for example *From Nationalism to Revolutionary Islam*, edited by Said Amir Arjomand. Albany: State University of New York Press 1984; Mark Juergensmeyer, *The New Cold War? Religious Nationalism Confronts the Secular State*. Berkeley: University of California Press 1993; Ian Lustick, *For the Land and the Lord. Jewish Fundamentalism in Israel*. New York: Council on Foreign Relations 1988; Stanley Tambiah, *Leveling Crowds: Ethnonationalist Conflicts and Collective Violence in South Asia*. Berkeley: University

movements, the lower classes did not become revolutionary but pious, and women did not fight against patriarchalism but submitted to it or even embraced it.

Faced with these events, social scientists had to cope with their cognitive dissonance and did so in interesting ways. Some authors have simply insisted that their expectations of modernization and secularization are basically sound. Focusing on the resurgence of religion in "developing countries" allowed them to pretend that these revivals of religion are still part of an ongoing process of modernization. And, not surprisingly, many have taken pains to detect a "Puritan spirit" or an "inner-worldly asceticism" in such movements. Although this observation is not necessarily false it narrows our understanding of such movements to those aspects which best fit our expectations while omitting those which do not.[3] Moreover, such a perspective ignores the resurgence of religion as public force in the West.[4]

Other authors have chosen the opposite route of instant conversion by denying the existence of any general trend towards secularization in the West and elsewhere. In particular, rational choice theorists and their mostly functionalist allies (what Stephen Warner has labeled the "new paradigm"[5]) have a rather narrow understanding and simplistic explanation of secularization. Max Weber has once suggested that secularization is the result of the emergence of relatively autonomous

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of California Press 1996; Peter van der Veer, *Religious Nationalism: Hindus and Muslims in India*. Berkeley: University of California Press 1994.

[3] See Ernest Gellner, *Muslim Society*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1981; Jacques Waardenburg, "The Puritan Pattern in Islamic Revival Movements." In *Schweizerische Zeitschrift für Soziologie* 3 (1983):687-702. A historically rich analysis of the Protestantization of Buddhism in the context of colonialism is offered in Richard Gombrich and Gananath Obeyesekere, *Buddhism Transformed*. Princeton: Princeton University Press 1988.

[4] For an excellent discussion of the "deprivatization" of religion see José Casanova, *Public Religions in the Modern World*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press 1994.

[5] See R. Stephen Warner, "Work in Progress Toward a New Paradigm for the Sociological Study of Religion in the United States." *American Journal of Sociology* 1993, vol. 98(5):1044-93.

economic, political, and legal institutions in the West which have made it impossible for social actors to fully participate in the "world" without giving up a consistent life conduct based on a religious ethic.[6] Ignoring these cultural and ethical dimensions, the authors of the "new paradigm" do not recognize a trend towards secularization inherent in institutional and ethical differentiation, but explain it simply as an effect of religious monopolies peculiar to European history.[7]

A third answer to the challenge of religious resurgence comes from Samuel Huntington who has radicalized an approach once formulated by Talcott Parsons. According to this view, societies have not become secularized but have become permeated by religious values. Although religious forms may have disappeared, religious morality has fundamentally shaped societies. For someone like Parsons therefore, the modern United States represents the most Christian country ever.[8] Huntington, generalizing this view, goes as far as to claim that the newly emerging world order will be based on civilizations which are mainly expressions of ultimate values generated by time-honored religious traditions.[9] Taking the rhetoric of fundamentalists at face value Huntington reifies and essentializes cultures and civilization on the basis of religion.

All these responses to the global resurgence of fundamentalist religion, from denial via conversion to essentialization, do not seem to ad-

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[6] Cf. among other texts his "Religious Rejections of the World and their Directions" and his "Science as a Vocation," both in *From Max Weber*, ed. by Hans Gerth and C.W. Mills. New York: Free Press.

[7] Rodney Stark and William Sims Bainbridge, *A Theory of Religion*. New York: P. Lang 1979; Lawrence A. Young ed., *Rational Choice Theory and Religion*, London: Routledge 1997; Rodney Stark, "Secularization, R.I.P." In *Sociology of Religion*, fn. 1. For a critique see Steve Bruce, *Choice and Religion*. New York: Oxford University Press 1999.

[8] Talcott Parsons, "Christianity and Modern Industrial Society." In *Sociological Theory, Values, and Sociocultural Change*, ed. by E. Tiryakian, New York: The Free Press 1963, pp. 13-70.

[9] Samuel Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*. New York: Simon and Schuster 1996.

equately answer the question of why these movements have emerged, why at this point in history, and what their future significance may be. In order to come to grips with the religious resurgence in general and its fundamentalist instantiations in particular, two tasks are at hand. First of all, we should revise our understanding of religion and formulate a theory of religion which explains the simultaneity and interdependence of processes of secularization and religious resurgence, a task I have attempted elsewhere.[10] Second, we need to turn to a more detailed conceptualization and comparative analysis of religious revitalization in general and of fundamentalist movements in particular in order to better understand the challenge they pose for our understanding of the role of religion in the modern world. Accordingly, I will not describe specific fundamentalist movements in this essay, but will attempt to characterize some basic features of such movements across religious traditions from a sociological perspective.[11]

Fundamentalism as a Concept

The very concept of fundamentalism has been criticized from various perspectives and it is indeed a legitimate question to ask to what, exactly, this concept refers. As is widely known the term fundamentalism emerged in early twentieth century American Protestantism to designate a religious movement which, among other things, opposed biblical criticism, the teaching of evolutionism, and the philosophy of Nietzsche while advocating biblical literalism, strict patriarchal moralism

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[10] I have briefly outlined such an approach in "Religion in Global Perspective." In *Global Religions: A Handbook*, ed. by Mark Juergensmeyer, New York: Oxford University Press forthcoming, and am working on a book on the topic.

[11] Naturally, such an attempt is limited, preliminary, and insufficient for a more complex understanding of any concrete movement. However, it may generate some interesting questions for comparative research. For empirical studies of different aspects of fundamentalist movements see the five volumes of the "Fundamentalism Project" all edited by Martin E. Marty and R. Scott Appleby: *Fundamentalisms Observed; Fundamentalisms and Society; Fundamentalisms and the State; Accounting for Fundamentalisms*; and *Fundamentalisms Comprehended* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press 1991-1995) and the bibliographies included in these volumes.

and authority, prohibition, control of social vices and self-control.[12] However, "fundamentalism" has become a term which nowadays is alsö used to refer to religious revival movements outside the Protestant tradition, in Islam and Judaism, in Buddhism, Hinduism, Sikhism, and even Confucianism.[13] Fundamentalism has also become a political catchword used to label and delegitimize religious groups and movements.[14]

This empirical widening and political instrumentalization of the concept poses many questions and concerns. In response, there are those who want to limit the term "fundamentalism" to Protestantism or at least to Christianity, arguing that it is an inherently Protestant or Christian concept which should not be applied outside of these traditions. Others are willing to use it for movements within the Abrahamic traditions of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam but not beyond.[15] I, on the other hand, have suggested to transform it into a sociological category with potentially universal applicability.[16] All these views reflect different attitudes towards comparisons, generalizations, and theorizing as well as different understandings of what is important about such movements.

All fundamentalist movements, of course, express features which are particular to the religious tradition from which they have emerged. But, from a sociological perspective, the fact that they also share so many features in common is perhaps more relevant, because it points towards the possibility that such movements emerge under the impact of rather similar processes of social transformation. Thus, I am not

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[12] George Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture: the Shaping of Twentieth Century Evangelicalism, 1870-1925*. New York: Oxford University Press 1980; Martin Riesebrodt, *Pious Passion. The Emergence of Fundamentalism in the United States and Iran*. Berkeley: University of California Press 1993.

[13] See Marty and Appleby (eds.), fn. 11.

[14] Mark Juergensmeyer, "Antifundamentalism," in Marty and Appleby (eds.), *Fundamentalisms Comprehended*, pp. 353-366.

[15] Bruce B. Lawrence, *Defenders of God: The Fundamentalist Revolt Against the Modern Age*. San Francisco: Harper & Row 1989.

[16] See my *Pious Passion*, pp. 10-20.

convinced by the arguments that advocate limiting the concept of fundamentalism to Protestantism or Christianity or the Abrahamic traditions. Since all concepts originate in a particularistic historical setting and language from which they are abstracted, the concept of "fundamentalism" is not necessarily "tainted" or impregnated by its Protestant origin, although we do have to take pains to consciously eliminate Christian particularities in order to transform it into a universally applicable sociological concept.

There is also a pragmatic reason to stick to "fundamentalism." Since it has become part of our everyday language, it seems to me preferable to take on this usage and try to give it more precision than to avoid it and invent an idiosyncratic scholarly concept to which no one pays attention. I propose to conceptualize fundamentalism as a specific type of religious revival movement which reacts to social changes perceived as a dramatic crisis. In such movements people attempt to restructure their life-worlds cognitively, emotionally, and practically, reinvent their social identities, and regain a sense of dignity, honor, and respect. But, such goals are achieved in fundamentalism in ways which are different from other types of religious revival movements.

Typology of Religious Revivalism

The everyday understanding associates fundamentalism with religious orthodoxy, often literalism, and a rigid moralism, especially with regard to sexual morals and gender relations, as well as intolerance, anti-pluralism, and anti-modernism. This is a useful starting point for a scientific definition because these characterizations imply three essential points: First, fundamentalism, even if it has secular relatives, is primarily a religious phenomenon. It is not just fascism, populism, or any other type of social movement in a religious garb. Religion plays an essential part in it by shaping its leadership, ideology, ethos, goals, and relationship to other social groups. Second, fundamentalism as a "rejection of the world" is a reaction to social and cultural changes which are experienced as a dramatic crisis. This feature distinguishes it from traditionalism. Fundamentalism represents a mobilized, radicalized traditionalism. And third, fundamentalism is a defensive reac-
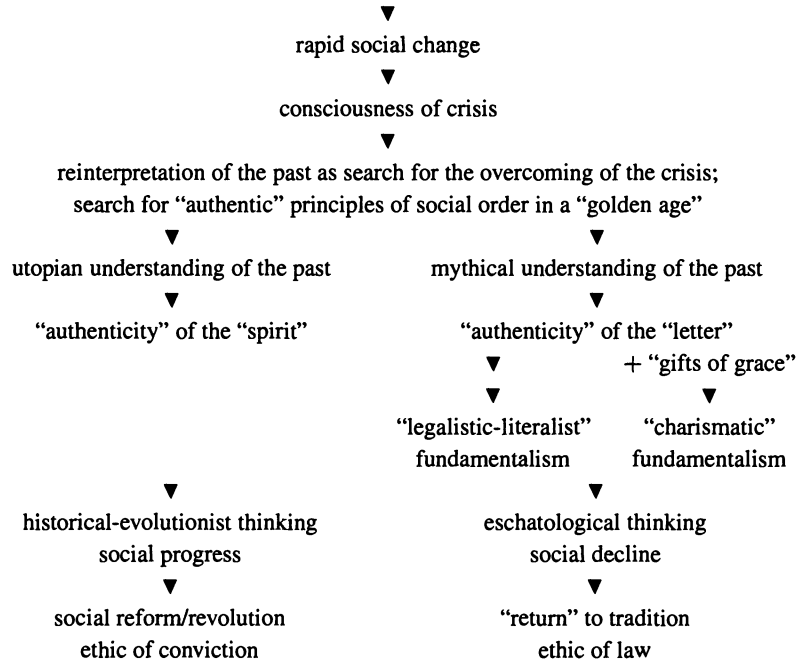
tion which attempts to preserve or restore an idealized or imagined former social order which is characterized by a strict patriarchal order and moralism. These features separate fundamentalism from radical reformist or social-revolutionary reactions to social change.

Religious reformers as well as fundamentalists nonetheless share some features. Both are mobilized by the experience of deep social crisis. Both attempt to overcome this crisis by falling back upon an ideal order of the past, usually that of the founder of the religion. However, this pursuit of authenticity takes different routes in these two types of movements. Reformers claim to transform social institutions in order to realize the spirit of the ancient community. Their approach is utopian, innovative, future-oriented; their ethic is primarily an ethic of conviction. The fundamentalists, on the other hand, claim to restore social institutions according to the letter and the law of the ancient community. With regard to the past, their approach can be called "mythical," referring to a timeless, unchangeable, fixed eternal truth. With regard to the present and (near) future, their view is often eschatological and chiliastic. Their ethic is primarily an ethic of law which tends to be rather rigid because of the concreteness of legal regulations.

On the basis of this definition of fundamentalism a further distinction should be made between "legalistic-literalist" and "charismatic" fundamentalism. "Legalistic-literalist" fundamentalism is centered on the regulation of everyday-life by religious-ethical principles or ritual obligations. It is represented by the religious scholar and the moralistic preacher. To this, "charismatic" fundamentalism additionally emphasizes the extraordinary experience of divine gifts and miracles. It represents a more emotional and enthusiastic religiosity embodied by the living saint and miracle worker.

"Legalistic-literalist" and "charismatic" fundamentalism are sometimes integrated into one movement, sometimes they are separated. "Legalistic-literalist" fundamentalism is connected usually with the ideal way of life of urban middle-classes, and "charismatic" fundamentalism with the ecstatic and magical needs of urban lower classes and rural population. Of course, not all religious-charismatic movements

TABLE 1

Types of Religious Revival Movements

▼

rapid social change

▼

consciousness of crisis

▼

reinterpretation of the past as search for the overcoming of the crisis;
search for "authentic" principles of social order in a "golden age"

▼	▼
utopian understanding of the past	mythical understanding of the past
▼	▼
"authenticity" of the "spirit"	"authenticity" of the "letter"

▼ + "gifts of grace"

▼ ▼

"legalistic-literalist" "charismatic"
fundamentalism fundamentalism

▼	▼
historical-evolutionist thinking	eschatological thinking
social progress	social decline
▼	▼
social reform/revolution	"return" to tradition
ethic of conviction	ethic of law

are fundamentalist. Only as long as charismatic practices are primarily an additional attempt to prove their chosenness within the limits of a strict ethic of law and an ethically rationalized way of life, they belong to fundamentalism proper. But whenever the charismatic experience becomes an independent goal in itself or whenever their chosenness leads to the claim of being above the ethic of law and above ritual obligations, then these charismatics belong to a different camp which is closer to the ideal type of mysticism as formulated by Ernst Troeltsch.[17]

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[17] Ernst Troeltsch, *The Social Teachings of the Christian Churches*. 2 vols, New York: Macmillan 1931.
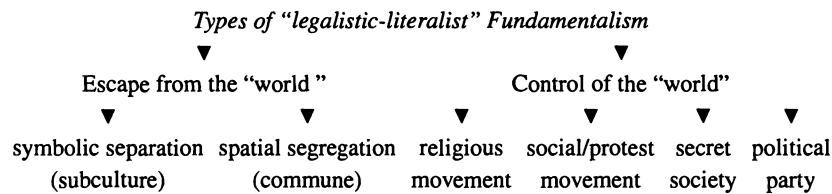
Typology of Fundamentalism

So far the characterization of fundamentalism has been based on a specific reaction to a dramatically perceived crisis which reinterprets the religious tradition and changes the view of and attitude towards history. This has allowed us to distinguish between fundamentalism and utopian revival movements. But our definition of fundamentalism remains nonetheless so general that many different organizational forms which claim to revive the "authentic order" are included. Using this definition alone we could still be comparing pacifists with militants and large scale organizations with small communities. For this basic distinction to make sociological sense we need in addition a typology of fundamentalism based on different attitudes towards society and on different forms of social organization.

Here Weber's typology of religious attitudes toward the world might be helpful which differentiates between approval and rejection on the one hand, and between control, adaptation, and withdrawal on the other. Fundamentalists clearly reject the world since their mobilization is caused by the experience of deep crisis. However, this rejection may lead either to an attitude of world-control or to one of withdrawal from the world. Both types can be realized in a variety of organizational forms.

Withdrawal may take the form of symbolic segregation as a sub-culture or of spatial separation as a commune. Control may be organized as a religious movement, a social or protest-movement, a secret-society, or a political party. One must however keep in mind that fundamentalist groups change their attitudes and organizational forms over time. Nevertheless, at a given point in time, this typological differentiation allows us to isolate those phenomena which many of us are probably most interested in: the politically active fundamentalist movements that seek power not only within religious institutions, but more importantly, in the public sphere.

The definition and typology of fundamentalism which I have proposed so far implies no historical limitation. Consequently, the question remains as to whether fundamentalism is a modern phenomenon

TABLE 2

Types of "legalistic-literalist" Fundamentalism

▼		▼			
Escape from the "world"		Control of the "world"			
▼	▼	▼	▼	▼	▼
symbolic separation (subculture)	spatial segregation (commune)	religious movement	social/protest movement	secret society	political party

or one which can also be found in premodern epochs. Bruce Lawrence has argued that fundamentalism is a product of modernity, dialectically intertwined with modernism. Therefore, according to Lawrence, fundamentalism, while it has antecedents in earlier epochs, has no precursors.[18] Although I would insist that fundamentalism is not necessarily an exclusively modern phenomenon, I would agree with Lawrence that in order to understand the specificity of contemporary movements one has to interpret and explain them in the context of Western modernity. Since all comparisons oscillate between total generality and total particularism, the levels of analysis and conceptualization depend on the question one wants to answer which should be informed by criteria of historical significance, theoretical consistency, and empirical validity.

From a sociological point of view it is an interesting observation that fundamentalist movements of the 19th and 20th century have emerged in response to similar processes of modernization and globalization as well as in opposition to a variety of modernist ideologies and ways of life. Since these processes have shaped similar generations of fundamentalists in different societies and cultures, they offer a frame of reference which allows for theoretically significant and culturally rich generalizing as well as particularizing comparisons. I will only attempt here to define some of these common characteristics of fundamentalist movements leaving the analysis of the obvious historical and cultural differences and particularities to others. Without claiming any completeness I identify four such basic features of fundamentalism: a radical traditionalism, a radical patriarchalism, its organization as a cultural milieu, and its mobilization of lay people.

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[18] Lawrence, *Defenders of God.*

Fundamentalism as Radical Traditionalism

Fundamentalism is not identical with traditionalism but represents a historical process of innovation. Fundamentalism arises from the tensions between tradition and modernity, and it incorporates aspects of both. The innovation is twofold: ideological and social. There is a reshaping and reinterpretation of tradition. Fundamentalism is not traditionalism but rather a traditionalism that has become reflexive.[19] It is a radicalized, sometimes even revolutionary, traditionalism which incorporates selective aspects of modernity and fuses them with an idealized or even imagined past social order.[20] Therefore, it is not an anti-modernist return to the Middle Ages, but rather a selective rejection of liberalism and socialism.

Fundamentalism is not an arbitrary ideological position, but its ideology is shaped by a dynamic process of group formation which arises in the context of social restructuring under the impact of industrialization, urbanization, bureaucratization, professionalization, and secularization. These processes do not allow traditionalists to take tradition for granted, but challenge them to defend it. By defending it they have to reflect upon it and they will selectively emphasize aspects which they feel are particularly important but in danger. Since it has become an object of ratiocination and contestation, tradition is transformed into an ideology in the sense of a comprehensive system of explanation and of agitation. In this process tradition is expanded into a relatively systematic and consistent social critique and theory of history, society, and salvation. Often there is a radical shift in historical views and sensibilities when rather dormant and defused eschatological and chiliastic teachings become dramatized

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[19] Cf. Karl Mannheim, *Conservatism: a Contribution to the Sociology of Knowledge*. Translated by David Kettler and Volker Meja. London & New York: Routledge & Kegan Paul 1986.

[20] Said A. Arjomand, "Traditionalism in Twentieth-century Iran," in S.A. Arjomand (ed.), *From Nationalism to Revolutionary Islam*, Albany: SUNY 1984, pp. 195-232; Martin Riesebrodt, *Pious Passion*, pp. 176 ff.

in the process of fundamentalist mobilization.[21] But fundamentalist ideologies also go beyond tradition by adopting and incorporating elements of modernity which have never been part of tradition. For example, fundamentalism appropriates the technical and technological side of modernity by making creative use of mass media and also responds to competing ideologies, like nationalism, liberalism, or Marxism.

Fundamentalism as Cultural Milieu

The innovative aspects of fundamentalism go beyond its radical reinterpretation of the religious tradition. Also as a social phenomenon fundamentalism is innovative in that it integrates people from diverse social backgrounds and from different class segments into novel kinds of associations and movements based on cultural ideals and practices. Although fundamentalist leaders also articulate political and economic ideals and programs, these tend to be much less important and central than the social moral and sexual moral ones. In their self-understanding fundamentalist movements are not class movements but cultural movements, or, as I have termed it elsewhere, they do not represent class cultures but cultural milieus.[22]

I speak of cultural milieus when group identity and perception of a common fate are primarily defined by shared ideals of sociomoral order and other non-economic criteria. Fundamentalist movements represent such cultural milieus. This does not imply that these movements cannot be socially relatively homogeneous; some of them are, others are not. But even the socially homogeneous fundamentalist movements do not perceive themselves in terms of class interests or a common economic fate. However socially, most fundamentalist movements ac-

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[21] See Martin Riesebrodt, "Zur Politisierung von Religion. Überlegungen am Beispiel fundamentalistischer Bewegungen." In Otto Kallscheuer (ed.), *Das Europa der Religionen*. Frankfurt: Fischer Verlag 1996, pp. 247-275.

[22] See my "Kulturmilieus und Klassenkulturen. Überlegungen zur Konzeptualisierung religiöser Bewegungen." In Hans Kippenberg and Brigitte Luchesi (eds.), *Lokale Religionsgeschichte*. Marburg: diagonal Verlag, pp. 43-58.

tually are rather heterogeneously composed. Although the traditionalist middle class may be the organizational backbone of some of those movements, the actual membership is usually quite diverse also in their economic interests. But fundamentalists' lack of class-consciousness is not just an effect of social heterogeneity, it is rather a programmatic, conscious rejection of the "unbrotherly" utilitarian and materialist orientation of modern market societies. Fundamentalists attempt to overcome class conflicts and propose a countermodel of social harmony based on shared religious and social moral ideals expressed in a pious life conduct.

The fundamentalist life conduct is often characterized by a certain asceticism, rejecting modern consumerism and emphasizing modesty and sobriety. Leisure time is spent in the family or in the religious community. In addition, strict adherence to religious rituals and observances further restricts social intercourse with other people. All this sets fundamentalists apart from the rest of society and reinforces a particularistic identity which is often symbolized in special clothing styles or hairstyles. In many cases fundamentalism creates its own cultural infrastructure, like kindergartens, schools, institutions of mutual help, or stores. This makes it independent from wider society and increases the chances that it will successfully pass its way of life and world view on to the next generation.

The history of fundamentalism in the twentieth century, however, shows a major shift in the social composition of such movements.[23] The first generation of fundamentalists mainly emerged from the traditionalist milieu and was widely centered around the traditionalist middle classes in conjunction with some elements of the new middle class which still had strong ties to the traditionalist milieu.[24] However, in the

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[23] See my "Fundamentalismus, Säkularisierung und die Risiken der Moderne." In Heiner Bielefeldt et al. (eds.), *Politisierte Religion*. Frankfurt: Suhrkamp 1998, pp. 67-90; and with respect to Islamic movements my "Islamischer Fundamentalismus aus soziologischer Sicht." In *Aus Politik und Zeitgeschichte*, B33/93, pp. 11-16.

[24] See Richard P. Mitchell, *The Society of the Muslim Brothers*. London: Oxford University Press 1969; or my *Pious Passion*, pp. 184-90.

course of time new generations of fundamentalists have emerged many of which have not grown up in traditionalist milieus but rather are new converts for whom the significance of fundamentalism is quite different from former generations. Their basis is less the old middle-class milieu but modern universities. Often consisting of the daughters and sons of secularist parents, this new generation has adopted fundamentalism as an oppositional ideology against the failures of the secular state.[25] For this new generation fundamentalism represents an alternative to socialist or secular nationalist movements as an ideology of protest and a vision of a just and harmonious society. However, what the different generations of fundamentalism share in common in contrast to other ideologies and movements is their radical patriarchalism.

Fundamentalism as Radical Patriarchalism

Although the ways of life and ideologies of different fundamentalist groups can vary considerably, they all tend to idealize patriarchal structures of authority and morality.[26] They all seem to share an advocacy of a god-given or "natural" gender dualism. Men and women are created different, because they were created for each other. The family is a sacred institution which expresses this purpose of creation. The god-given or "natural" task of women is the bearing and raising of children, her natural sphere is the domestic one. The god-given or "natural" task of men is to father children, to protect the family

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[25] For the Islamic context see for example Gilles Kepel, *Muslim Extremism in Egypt: the Prophet and Pharaoh*. Transl. by J. Rothschild. Berkeley: University of California Press 1985; and Saad Eddin Ibrahim, *Egypt, Islam and Democracy*. Cairo: The American University in Cairo Press 1996. For American Protestantism see James D. Hunter, *Evangelicalism. The Coming Generation*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press 1987. See also Mark Juergensmeyer, *The New Cold War? Religious Nationalism Confronts the Secular State*. Berkeley: University of California Press 1993.

[26] See my *Pious Passion* as well as Helen Hardacre, "The New Religions, Family, and Society in Japan," in Marty and Appleby (eds.), *Fundamentalisms and Society*, pp. 294-310. See also Martin Riesebrodt and Kelly Chong, "Fundamentalisms and Patriarchal Gender Politics." In *Journal of Women's History*, Vol. 10, No. 4 (Winter 1999): 55-77.

and provide the resources necessary. His natural sphere is the extra-domestic one.[27] The female body has to be decently covered so that it does not arouse the male passions. In an Islamic context this may include veiling while in a Protestant context it may refer to the length of the skirt. But whatever its cultural forms, the patriarchal family, patriarchal authority, and gender dualism are central to fundamentalist identity. And fundamentalists share the belief that only a return to such principles can overcome the present crisis.

Although fundamentalism exposes a rather strict patriarchal ideology and advocates the submission of women to patriarchal authority, it also has activated women to rethink the religious tradition on their own and come up with a redefinition of their social roles. In conjunction with higher levels of education and inclusion into the labor market, this has led to a renegotiation of gender relations within fundamentalist milieus.[28] In some instances it has not only led to less rigid practical arrangements of patriarchal relations but even to the (unintended) development of an indigenous religious feminism.[29]

The basic patriarchal principles apply also to the economic and political sphere. The economic ideals of the first generation consist basically in a traditionalist, personalistic type of capitalism based on the family model which is much more comfortable with local and regional economic relations than with national, international or even global ones. Although fundamentalists often are religious nationalists, they want to limit economic and political interference of the state in local and regional affairs, tending to emphasize the role of the

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[27] See Nilüfer Göle, *The Forbidden Modern: Civilization and Veiling.* Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press 1996; Margaret L. Bendroth, *Fundamentalism and Gender, 1875 to the Present.* New Haven & London: Yale University Press 1993; Martin Riesebrodt, "Fundamentalism and the Political Mobilization of Women." In Said Arjomand (ed.), *The Political Dimensions of Religion.* Albany: SUNY Press 1993.

[28] See Riesebrodt and Chong, fn. 26.

[29] Göle, *Forbidden Modern*; Judith Stacey, *Brave New Families.* New York: Basic Books 1991; Fatima Mernissi, *The Veil and the Male Elite,* transl. by Mary Jo Lakeland, Reading: Addison-Wesley Pub. Co.1991.

state as guardian of the social moral order and as a protector against competition and organized labor. Within the second generation of fundamentalists some share these ideals, others advocate a more comprehensive involvement of a theocratic state into social life.

Fundamentalism as Lay Mobilization

As radical traditionalists fundamentalists revise religious practices and restructure religious authority. Although preachers and clergy seem to dominate fundamentalist movements as spokespersons and organizers, fundamentalism is actually based on an astounding mobilization of the laity and undermines traditional religious authority. In most cases fundamentalism represents an immense expansion of what Max Weber has called "religious lay rationalism."[30] This lay mobilization might be the most interesting aspect of fundamentalist movements which also might have the longest lasting social effects.

In the political mobilization of fundamentalist movements, social groups which were widely excluded from political participation have been entering the political process often in interrelation with a new kind of leadership which articulates their specific grievances and demands.[31] Included in this political mobilization are often women despite the ideology that they do not belong to the public sphere.[32]

But fundamentalism is not exclusively or even predominantly about political mobilization and influence. It is often much more centrally about the reshaping of the self through a pious life conduct and the development and cultivation of a specifically religious ethos. In other words, fundamentalist religiosity does not necessarily or primarily serve non-religious ends of economic betterment or political

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[30] Weber, *Sociology of Religion*. Boston: Beacon Press 1963.

[31] See Said Arjomand, *The Turban for the Crown*. New York: Oxford University Press 1988; R. Scott Appleby, *Spokesmen for the Despised*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press 1997.

[32] See my "Fundamentalism and the Political Mobilization of Women", fn. 27.

empowerment, but often defines ends which are pursued because of their believed inherent value, like being good, pious, or virtuous.[33]

As such, these movements dramatically contribute to the spreading of religious literacy and a new religious ethos, often including categories of people into such practices who were traditionally excluded or more prone towards "folk religion." Most important again is the inclusion of women.[34] This new religious ethos will have a major impact not only on the present generation. Since it profoundly influences practices of socialization, its actual cultural and social significance will become more visible in the next generation. Because of such unintended consequences, the fundamentalist mobilization and activation of lay people may turn out to have represented a cultural revolution of great importance.

Explaining the Fundamentalist Resurgence of Religion

Given these features of fundamentalism, what, then, are some of the reasons of the fundamentalist resurgence of religion? Why are people attracted to join fundamentalist religious communities, and who are they? What is the significance of the emphasis on issues of gender and sexuality in fundamentalist ideologies? And what is the relationship between the emergence of fundamentalist movements and the global order?

It seems safe to say that the overwhelming majority of carriers of fundamentalist movements represent those who have experienced Western "modernization," e.g. bureaucratization, expansion of the market economy, and secularization, as threat, disappointment, or even catastrophe. This seems true in different respects for both generations of fundamentalists: the traditional middle and working classes as well as the upwardly mobile, secularly educated children from traditional households and the new converts.

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[33] For an excellent study of such pious practices see Saba Mahmoud, *Women's Piety and Embodied Discipline: The Islamic Resurgence in Contemporary Egypt*. Diss. Stanford 1998.

[34] See Göle, *Forbidden Modern*.

The first generation of fundamentalists feels threatened and alienated by their increasing marginalization and disenfranchisement. The centralization and secularization of the state removed them from political decision processes, interfered with their local autonomy and bureaucratized (or even secularized) the educational and legal institutions. Modern political parties were often not able to integrate major elements of the traditionalist classes and to address their specific economic and status interests.

Moreover, these economic, political, and social transformations are not just abstract processes, but are represented and symbolized by the emergence of a new modern middle-class and a working class whose attitudes, ethos, life-style, and morality are quite contrary to those of the traditionalist classes. They, who formerly represented the embodiment of a moral way of life, are now defined as backward. Losing their cultural dominance and their chances to pass their way of life on to the next generation, these traditionalists feel displaced, disrespected, and threatened by moral decay.

The second generation of fundamentalists represents a somewhat different case. Often they are border-crossers between traditionalism and modernism. Many come from traditionalist families, but have received a modern secular education and are upwardly mobile in their orientation. Others are new converts who have grown up in secular households. However, when their expectations of job security, economic prosperity, social ascend, and prestige are not fulfilled in reality, these groups easily project their aspirations into an imagined just social order of a distant past and turn against the state. For all those who have suffered from these dramatic social changes, who have either experienced a loss in social status, whose hopes have been disappointed, who have problems coping with the changing structures of social relations and the normative order, or who believe that they have paid too high a price for their newly acquired status, a rejection of the present and those who are believed to be responsible for it is a very plausible reaction.

The question now arises why these groups do not organize on the basis of class interests but instead in terms of shared sociomoral

ideals. I would suggest that such transitional situations of dramatic social change in the form of upward, downward, horizontal, and demographic mobility render a definition not only of one's identity and belonging, but also of one's economic interests extremely difficult. How are one's interests defined and whom does one owe solidarity? Is it determined by the past, the present, or the imagined future? The seemingly simple definition of material interests depends on one's embeddedness in social relations. If I do not know who I am and to whom I belong, an articulation of material interests seems more problematic than one would otherwise assume. When old bonds and identities are no longer strong enough and new ones have not yet sufficiently developed, a world view like the fundamentalist one overcomes all these contradictions and doubts. It offers a holistic and culturally oriented vision, a social critique, ideals of a just social order, and a view of history which reflects quite appropriately the diffuse and confusing experiences of its diverse followers.

Moreover, the social composition and identity of class heterogeneous milieus render an articulation of common material interests other than in the abstract category of "justice" nearly impossible. Additionally, for social classes which have not perceived themselves in terms of class interests but rather in terms of a status honor, like the traditionalist middle class, an articulation of protest in terms of simple material interests is highly unlikely. For them, a whole way of life is at stake. These kinds of factors make the message of a return to a moral order of justice, piety, patriarchal authority, and modesty attractive to first as well as second generation fundamentalists. The modernist utopianism of history as a never ending process of social perfection and individual opportunity is countered with a dramatized scenario of salvation history where society is in decay and the cleavages are not between classes, or between those who make it and those who don't, but between good and evil, forces of God and forces of Satan.

What is the significance of the strong emphasis on patriarchal authority and morality, why are issues of gender and sexual morality so important in fundamentalist ideology, rhetoric, and practice? In part, an

answer has been suggested already. Since fundamentalism represents a cultural milieu, issues of social-moral order predominate. But why is it patriarchal authority and sexual morality instead of a concern for the poor or for "god's creation"? The problem is multilayered. Most important, the family and gender relations are areas where dramatic social changes are experienced most directly and dramatically. If partner relations deteriorate, children no longer accept the authority of their parents, and new rules of conduct may not be available or yet be acceptable, a classic Durkheimian crisis of anomie has occurred. Such a crisis may be more severely felt than any economic hardship because it undermines the trust in the most basic, personal, and sensitive social relationships.

Why don't people simply adapt to new ways of life and social relations? Many do. But, fundamentalists are as seriously committed to patriarchal family values and morality as modernists are to human rights and gender equality. Certain values are not negotiable. Moreover, issues of gender relations and sexual morality have attained a central symbolic significance in the conflict between modernists and fundamentalists. Since all symptoms of decay are ultimately explained by the fundamentalist ideology in terms of an abandonment of faith measured by adherence to patriarchal social morality, even political or economic conflicts may be perceived and acted out in terms of a "Kulturkampf" between the secularists and their state on the one hand and the pious and their god on the other.

Why are these people turning to religious instead of secular ideologies? What does religion offer that secular ideologies do not? Of course, in some societies many have turned to secular or pseudo-religious ideologies, like fascism or populism, especially when religious institutions are closely connected with the modernizing state and when the definition of legitimate religion is tightly controlled. In some cases, political repression has made it easier for people to organize in religious associations. But, generally speaking, the attraction of religion can have many sources.

Of course, for those who are attached to a religious tradition, its practices, beliefs, and values, a religious articulation of protest is most

obvious and plausible. However, as we have seen already, some of the attractiveness of religion has to do with group dynamics. There are many second generation fundamentalists who have grown up in rather moderately religious or even secular households for whom the turn to religion is new. When militant secularism is associated with the modernist milieu, the opposition against it will likely turn to religion for its articulation of protest. Religion offers the strongest counterposition vis-a-vis the modernist milieu and its secular way of life. It also provides the actors with a high degree of legitimacy by uniting them into a community of the just, a party of god, which transcends class interests and boundaries. Religion ennobles the struggle against a common enemy and frames fundamentalists as soldiers sharing a fate in an apocalyptic battle.

But fundamentalism is not simply a critique of others or a convenient language, it also offers a strong position of its own which is institutionalized in religious associations and their practices. Fundamentalist milieus are often quite successful in restructuring the life-worlds of their followers cognitively, emotionally, and even practically, reinventing their social identities and helping them regain a sense of dignity, honor, and respect. Moreover, religions already have the infrastructure of daily, weekly, monthly, and yearly routines which secular ideologies have a hard time inventing.

Finally, what is the relationship between fundamentalist movements and the emerging global order? Huntington has argued that the world will be shaped by conflicts between civilizations based on ultimate religious values. Based on my analysis of fundamentalism, I would like to suggest a different scenario. Although religious traditions can be the basis of social identity and solidarity, all traditions in the contemporary world tend to be fragmented into a variety of cultural milieus which expose different attitudes towards major features of modern life. There exist comparable cultural milieus in different religious traditions which might share as much in common as opposing milieus within the same tradition. Therefore a realistic scenario of possible relations of solidarity and conflict has to be much more complex and mobile than the one suggested by Huntington. Since

secularism and fundamentalism constitute each other socially and ideologically, fundamentalism is neither the final realization of the religious core of any "civilization," nor is it a momentary aberration from a predestined path to secularism, but it is and will remain a recurring historical phenomenon within the modern world.

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NEW AGE RELIGION AND SECULARIZATION[1]

WOUTER J. HANEGRAAFF

Some years ago a considerable stir was caused in the Dutch popular media by a novel which had climbed the bestseller lists with almost unprecedented speed and then stubbornly refused to vanish from the number one position. The book was written by an American, James Redfield, and had a catchy title: *The Celestine Prophecy*. Following its phenomenal success, an accompanying *Celestine Workbook* quickly appeared; and by the time everybody knew that the *Celestine Prophecy* was about the revelation of "nine spiritual insights," the time was deemed ripe for a follow-up entitled *The Tenth Insight*, quickly followed by its own workbook. The end is not yet in sight: at the time of writing those who thirst for more may profit from yet a third volume in the series, *The Celestine Vision*, again with its own workbook. Even though these later volumes have not attained the same sales as the first, they must still be considered highly successful books, as attested by their prolonged presence on the Dutch bestseller lists. The "celestine phenomenon" is an international one — on the World Wide Web the nine insights are the subject of enthusiastic discussion, Redfield's books have spawned a whole range of secondary products (books of aphorisms, videotapes, and so on), and the lessons of the workbooks

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are now being put into practice in the context of numerous courses for spiritual development.[2]

Let me begin this article with two statements. Firstly, *The Celestine Prophecy* is an extremely significant book which should be on the reading list of anybody who wishes to understand what is happening to religion in contemporary western societies. Secondly, this does not detract from the fact that *The Celestine Prophecy* is an appallingly shallow piece of writing, produced by an author without an ounce of literary talent and whose "insights" evince a remarkable lack of profundity or originality. I cannot recall ever having encountered a book of worse quality during more than five years of studying New Age literature.[3]

It will be obvious, therefore, that if I consider *The Celestine Prophecy* such an important book it is not because of its qualitative merits but in spite of their absence. Bestsellers of this kind are significant because they function as a sort of thermometer for what is happening to religion in our society. As such, *The Celestine Prophecy* has succeeded in bringing many observers to an unexpected, even revelatory, insight (but one which will not be found among the nine discussed in the book): "New Age spirituality" is no longer a phenomenon limited to a comparatively marginal subculture, but has developed into a type of broad folk religion which appeals to many people at all levels of society. To many observers this has come as an unpleasant surprise. Literary critics and journalists were mystified and shocked by the suggestion that precisely this kind of *Trivialliteratur* encapsulates the sentiments of the spiritually interested populace. But while such reactions are understandable enough, there is no reason to infer that everybody who has experienced the *Celestine Prophecy* as an inspiring

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[2] The three main titles are: James Redfield, *The Celestine Prophecy: An Adventure*, London 1995; id., *The Tenth Insight: Holding the Vision. Further Adventures of the Celestine Prophecy*, Toronto 1996; id., *The Celestine Vision: Living the New Spiritual Awareness*, New York, 1997.

[3] For the results of my analysis of popular New Age literature, see Wouter J. Hanegraaff, *New Age Religion and Western Culture: Esotericism in the Mirror of Secular Thought*, Leiden/New York/Köln 1996 [U.S. edition: Albany 1998].

book is therefore devoid of any critical judgment. Many readers appear to realize very well that the book is not exactly an impressive feat of literary skill, but this simply does not seem to be a matter of concern to them. They are not looking for an exciting story or for literary subtlety. From talks with enthusiastic readers, I have concluded that what seems to impress them is a feeling of recognition, of being understood. Redfield writes things which seem to resonate with their own experience, and his book provides them with a welcome occasion and a point of reference for talking about it. As I will argue, this experience is essentially one of dissatisfaction with certain aspects of contemporary culture and society.

In my opinion, the success of *The Celestine Prophecy* demonstrates that New Age thinking has taken root in contemporary western society to a much greater extent than most observers would like to believe. That precisely this book has attained such phenomenal popularity may be explained by its very simplicity. Its commercial surplus value lies in the fact that it can reach not only the better educated, but also those who rarely ever read books and for whom most of the standard New Age literature already tends to be quite difficult. Apparently — and contrary to what has sometimes been suggested — there appears to be a market for New Age among this less educated sector of the populace as well: it merely needs to be approached on its own intellectual level in order to be mobilized.[4]

Why is it that New Age spirituality has such a broad appeal in contemporary western society? Let me first give a very brief sketch of what I mean by "New Age".[5]

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[4] Sociological research suggests that New Age thinking appeals mainly to representatives of the better-educated middle classes. As far as I know, the question of whether this is because the less-educated are less interested in New Age spirituality, or because a latent interest is not being capitalized upon, has seldom been posed. The success of *The Celestine Prophecy* points towards the latter explanation. For those whose literature does not go beyond the level of popular doctor novels, most of the standard literature in New Age bookshops will not have much appeal.

[5] For an extensive discussion I refer to my *New Age Religion*. A somewhat more complete summary version than provided here may be found in my article "The New

1. New Age

New Age thinking in general is characterized by a pervasive pattern of implicit or explicit culture criticism. Within a New Age context one may encounter a very wide variety of ideas and convictions, but underneath there is a general dissatisfaction with certain aspects of western thought such as one may encounter in contemporary culture. Those who are attracted by New Age thinking do not necessarily have very explicit ideas about the coming of a "new era," but they all agree that our society could and should be different. I suggest that it is this (often latent and half-conscious) experience of dissatisfaction with existing daily realities, a feeling that mainstream culture leaves no room for certain important dimensions of personal human experience, which is activated and "given a voice" by a book such as *The Celestine Prophecy*. An analysis of representative New Age sources makes it possible to formulate this New Age culture criticism in technical terms. Firstly, all New Agers object to *dualism* in its various forms: therapeutic (i.e., assuming a sharp separation between body and spirit, as well as between healing and spiritual development), religious (i.e., opposing God as Creator against created beings), ecological (i.e., opposing man against nature), and so on. Such various forms of dualism should be replaced by "holistic" alternatives: God and man are one in their deepest essence, therapies must treat "the whole person" and the healing process is a process of spiritual development at one and the same time, humanity must rediscover its lost connection with nature, and so on. In addition, New Age thinking is generally opposed to *reductionism* in its various forms: the universe does not resemble a dead mechanism but a living organism permeated by a spiritual force,

Age Movement and the Esoteric Tradition," in: Roelof van den Broek and Wouter J. Hanegraaff (eds.), *Gnosis and Hermeticism from Antiquity to Modern Times*, Albany 1998, 359-382; I go beyond the discussions in my book in my articles "New Age Spiritualities as Secular Religion: A Historian's Perspective," *Social Compass* 46: 2 (1999) and "'The New Age Movement," in: Linda Woodhead (ed.), *Religion in the Modern World: Traditions and Transformations*, London 2000.

and the dimension of the spiritual itself cannot be reduced to purely material processes.

A very similar pattern of culture criticism may also be encountered elsewhere, for example in certain environmental and feminist movements. What sets New Age apart is that its primary sources of inspiration for formulating holistic alternatives are derived from certain so-called "western esoteric" traditions which have long existed in our culture but have seldom been dominant. New Agers usually ascribe dualist and reductionist tendencies in western culture to the influence of a dogmatic, institutionalized Christianity on the one hand, and an over-rationalist science on the other. But apart from these two, they assume the existence of a third current, which has usually been marginalized and suppressed by the other two. This third current is referred to by various terms, such as "esotericism" or "gnosis". In the former instance, the idea is that an inner core of true spirituality lies hidden behind the outer surface of all religious traditions, and that the knowledge of it has been kept alive by secret traditions throughout the ages.[6] In the latter instance, New Agers do not primarily mean the largely dualist metaphysical systems knows as gnosticism, but a supposedly universal spirituality based upon the primacy of personal inner experience.[7]

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[6] This combines two common meanings of western esotericism, as distinct from a third one used as a technical term in academic discussion. See Antoine Faivre, "Questions of Terminology Proper to the Study of Esoteric Currents in Modern and Contemporary Europe," in: Antoine Faivre and Wouter J. Hanegraaff (eds.), *Western Esotericism and the Science of Religion: Selected Papers Presented at the 17th Congress of the International Association for the History of Religions, Mexico City 1995* (Gnostica: Texts & Interpretations 2), Louvain 1998; and cf. Wouter J. Hanegraaff, "Some Remarks on the Study of Western Esotericism," *Theosophical History* (1998) March 1999, 223-232 [tevens: *Esoterica* 1:1 <www.esoteric.msu.edu>].

[7] Cf. Wouter J. Hanegraaff, "On the Construction of 'Esoteric Traditions'," in: Faivre and Hanegraaff, *Western Esotericism and the Science of Religion.*

New Agers themselves tend to present a highly biased and factually misleading picture of these traditions[8] but from a historical point of view it is true that the New Age movement has indeed emerged from what may be referred to as "esoteric" currents in western culture. While New Agers tend to be especially fascinated by the gnostic currents in early Christianity, the historical roots of the New Age movement actually have a more recent origin. As I have argued at length elsewhere, the New Age movement can be regarded as a contemporary manifestation and transformation of western esoteric currents and traditions which originated in the early Renaissance.[9] It is therefore important to emphasize that when I use the term "esotericism" in the rest of this article, I am *never* using it in the popular sense of the word (where it tends to be used as a near synonym of "New Age") but, rather, in the technical academic sense, referring to a cluster of specific historical traditions which become clearly perceptible in connection with the revival of hermeticism in the late 15th century.[10]

According to this usage, the term "western esotericism" covers a complicated mixture of currents which in their original form are an integral part of the history of Christianity, and which flourished between the late 15th and the end of the 18th centuries. Like the more dominant currents of Christianity, western esoteric currents have taken on radically new forms under the impact of processes of secularization since the period of the Enlightenment, and this is an important point to emphasize. One frequently encounters the assumption that modern manifestations of western esotericism cannot be so very different from their predecessors in earlier centuries. According to critical outsiders,

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[8] Here I foreshadow the chapter on emic and etic esoteric historiographies in the important monograph by Olav Hammer, *Claiming Knowledge,* forthcoming in Brill's series "Studies in the History of Religions" (Numen Book Series).

[9] For an overview of western esoteric traditions, see Antoine Faivre, *Access to Western Esotericism,* Albany 1994.

[10] For a technical definition of western esotericism, see Faivre, *Access,* 10-15; and for a criticism, see Hanegraaff, *New Age Religion,* 396-403.

this is because irrationalism and "magical" or "occult" superstition are universal human temptations present in all periods and cultures. According to modern esotericists, it is because the esoteric is a universal spiritual presence, the essential reality of which remains unaffected by cultural contingencies. Against these assumptions of universality, I believe it to be undeniable that the 19th century produced radically innovative mixtures of traditional esoteric and modern rationalist and scientific ideas. The result was a *new* phenomenon, which is best referred to as "occultism". Occultism may therefore be defined as secularized esotericism. It is this 19th-century phenomenon, and not some supposed universal gnosis, which forms the historical foundation of New Age.

The above will suffice as a summary of what I mean by "New Age". It is important to bear in mind that I will not use the terms western esotericism and occultism in the popular sense, with all their vague and emotional connotations but, rather, as technical terms for specific historical currents and phenomena. Western esotericism is a well-defined complex of traditions within the context of Christianity (although with parallels in Judaism and Islam).[11] The secularization of western esotericism produced a new phenomenon, referred to here as occultism. This is not to deny that (strange though it may sound to some readers) there is such a thing as Christian occultism, which attempts to preserve the essence of the religious context from which it has emerged.[12] In the majority of cases, however, the secularization of western esotericism resulted in a post-Christian occultism.

2. *Religion, religions, and spiritualities*

I suggested above that *The Celestine Prophecy* should be on the reading list of anybody who wishes to understand what is happening to religion in contemporary western societies. In order to expand on this

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[11] Cf. Wouter J. Hanegraaff, "Empirical Method in the Study of Esotericism," *Method & Theory in the Study of Religion* 7: 2 (1995), 121-124.

[12] See Jean-Pierre Laurant, *L'ésotérisme chrétien en France au XIXe siécle* (Politica Hermetica), Lausanne 1992.

statement, I will have to explain how I understand the term "religion". I propose the following definition:

> *Religion* = any symbolic system which influences human action by providing possibilities for ritually maintaining contact between the everyday world and a more general meta-empirical framework of meaning.[13]

Let me break up this definition into its component parts. By referring to religion as a symbolic system, I mean that it is a system of "carriers of meaning" in the broadest sense of the word. For example, a Christian who attends church on Sundays enters a domain which is full of objects, words, images, sounds, actions, etc., all of which together form a whole which is meaningful to him. The tradition in which he has been brought up enables him to interpret this ensemble as well as its various components, and to understand their meaning. In his daily life during the rest of the week, symbols of religion may also be encountered to various extents, for example in certain books or papers he may read, images he may have on his walls, a political party for which he votes, a club or society in which he participates, and so on. And outside the private sphere, as well, he may encounter symbols which he immediately recognizes as "his own" (as well as those of "others," which he may or may not immediately recognize as religious). Even if the role of religious symbols in his life remains largely confined to Sundays, they have an indisputable influence on his pattern of action. They make it possible for him to remain in contact — in church or elsewhere — with a framework of meaning which goes beyond the evidence of his sensory experience. And how is this contact maintained?

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[13] This is a critical reformulation of the famous definition proposed by Clifford Geertz in 1966 ("Religion as a Cultural System," in M. Banton (ed.), *Anthropological Approaches to the Study of Religion* (ASA Monographs 3), repr. London 1985). For a detailed discussion see Wouter J. Hanegraaff, "Defining Religion in Spite of History," in: Jan G. Platvoet and Arie L. Molendijk (eds.), *The Pragmatics of Defining Religion: Contexts, Concepts and Contests*, Leiden/Boston/Köln: Royal E.J. Brill 1999, 337-378.

Primarily by *doing* certain things with at least a minimum of consistency,[14] and refraining from doing others.

New Age, then, is a form of religion as well. It is another symbolic system, in terms of which another ensemble of objects, words, images, sounds, actions, etc., carry another complex of meanings. But it still fulfills the same function — it influences the actions of New Agers because it enables them, in the things they do and the things they refrain from doing, to maintain contact between their everyday lives and a larger, more general framework of meaning.

While the above is a definition of religion, it is not a definition of *a* religion. I speak of a religion whenever the symbolic system in question takes the form of a social institution. Accordingly, the Dutch Reformed Church is religion as well as a religion. The same cannot be said about the New Age movement — we may speak of New Age religion, but not of New Age as *a* religion. Evidently this is not to deny that a group of New Agers may decide to come together in some kind of institutional form, either of a rudimentary or a more developed kind. The result is then "a New Age religion" (although perhaps a very small one): the equivalent of what is often referred to as a New Age "cult".

"Religion," therefore, may take the form of "a religion," but need not do so. Alternatively, religion may take another form as well, which I propose to refer to as "a spirituality":

> A *spirituality* = any human practice which maintains contact between the everyday world and a more general meta-empirical framework of meaning by way of the individual manipulation of symbolic systems.[15]

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[14] Note that my use of the term "ritual" refers to "ritual action" in a general sense rather than implying a definition of "ritual". It is possible to imagine a religious ritual which is enacted only once. Ritual action, however, whether in religious or non-religious contexts, is characterized by at least a minimal element of repetition.

[15] My use of the term "manipulation" might create misunderstanding. I do not intend to make a statement about the extent to which individuals are capable of dissociating or distancing themselves from the various symbolic systems present in a given cultural and social context. I defend neither an extreme view of the "autonomous subject" which is supposedly at full liberty to make choices among the various

This is again a variation on my definition of "religion," but it is evidently very different from *a* religion. In order to explain my concept of "a spirituality," I would like to discuss two cases. The first one is an example of "a Christian spirituality," the second is an example of "a New Age spirituality".

During the first half of the 17th century, in the small town of Görlitz (now on the German-Polish border) lived a cobbler named Jacob Boehme.[16] Having been tormented for years by questions about the origin of evil and suffering in the world, he finally experienced an interior illumination which changed his life. He describes how God permitted him a momentary glance into the innermost "center of nature," thus enabling him to perceive all earthly things in the light of the divine mystery: the mystery of Good and Evil, Light and Darkness, divine Love and divine Wrath, and the reconciliation of these opposites by Christ. Boehme would devote the rest of his life to a continuing attempt to explain his interior experience in human language, and develop the implications of his vision. His writings are the work of a visionary genius and were to become the foundation of a rich spiritual tradition.[17]

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symbolic systems which are available in the "religious supermarket" of contemporary western society, nor a (no less extreme) view according to which this so-called subject is merely a passive exponent of supra-personal "collective forces". Symbolic systems are products of human beings who are in turn products of symbolic systems. The power of existing social structures is no less crucial than the capacity of individuals to make individual choices. In this context, the term "manipulation" merely means the empirical fact that people come up with personal and creative interpretations of existing symbolic systems. The question of where precisely the limits of their freedom of interpretation lie can be disregarded here.

[16] On Boehme, see Alexandre Koyré, *La philosophie de Jacob Boehme*, Paris 1971; Pierre Deghaye, *La naissance de Dieu, ou la doctrine de Jacob Boehme*, Paris 1985; Andrew Weeks, *Boehme: An Intellectual Biography of the Seventeenth-Century Philosopher and Mystic*, Albany 1991.

[17] See for example Pierre Deghaye, "Jacob Boehme and his Followers," in Antoine Faivre and Jacob Needleman (eds.), *Modern Esoteric Spirituality*, New York 1992, 210–247; Antoine Faivre, "Le courant théosophique (fin XVIe-XXe siècle): Essai de périodisation," in: Faivre, *Accès de l'ésotérisme occidental* II, Paris 1996, 45-167;

Boehmian theosophy is a characteristic manifestation of the complex of traditions referred to under the general label of "western esotericism" (*supra*). It is evident that this perspective belongs to the domain of "religion" as I define it. Moreover (in spite of his problems with a local minister who considered him a heretic), Boehme's esoteric teachings are undoubtedly rooted in *a* religion: Christianity as such, and the Lutheranism of his time in particular. But in addition to this, we are evidently also dealing here with "a spirituality". Boehme's work is the product of an "individual manipulation" of the various symbolic systems he had at his disposal: Christian symbolism in general, the more recent symbolism of Lutheranism in particular, as well as mystical traditions connected with the writings of Eckhart and Tauler, the nature-philosophical and esoteric symbolism of alchemy, and the teachings of Paracelsus. Using elements of these various symbolic systems, he created a new synthesis — a new way of understanding his native Christian faith. It is not necessary here to enter into the historical backgrounds of the traditions just mentioned; what concerns me here is Jacob Boehme's work as an example of *a spirituality rooted in the symbolic system of a religion.*

Let me now compare this first case of a spirituality with a second, characteristic of New Age religion. I have intentionally chosen an example which displays certain similarities with Boehme, in order to make the differences stand out all the more clearly. On 9 September 1963, the New York science fiction writer Jane Roberts was suddenly and unexpectedly "hit" by a powerful psychic experience. She was quietly sitting at the table when, as she describes, '[b]etween one normal minute and the next, a fantastic avalanche of radical new ideas burst into my head with tremendous force, as if my skull were some sort of receiving station, turned up to unbearable volume'.[18]

Arthur Versluis, "Christian Theosophic Literature of the 17th and 18th Centuries," in Van den Broek and Hanegraaff, *Gnosis and Hermeticism*; B.J. Gibbons, *Gender in Mystical and Occult Thought: Behmenism and its Development in England*, Cambridge 1996.

[18] Jane Roberts, *The Seth Material*, Toronto 1970, 11-12. Cf. my discussions in *New Age Religion*, 28-29, 37 and *passim*. For further background information on Roberts,

The experience involved not only ideas, but was also accompanied by extreme and unusual physical sensations and by a sort of psychedelic experience of travelling through many dimensions. When she regained her composure, she found herself furiously scribbling down the words and ideas that had flashed through her head. In an attempt to find out what had happened to her, she and her husband started experimenting with spiritistic techniques. Some time later they contacted a spirit, who eventually began to communicate directly through Jane Roberts' body. In this way, she developed into a so-called trance medium or "channel" for a "higher entity," who referred to himself as Seth. Seth's messages were published and have exerted an enormous (and still underestimated) influence on the development of the New Age movement. The core of his teaching is that we all "create our own reality," in a process of spiritual evolution through countless existences on this planet as well as in an infinity of other dimensions. Few New Agers realize how many of the beliefs which they take for granted in their daily lives have their historical origin in Seth's messages.

The intriguing phenomenon of channeling is not my subject here.[19] I would merely like to emphasize how strongly Seth's messages appear to fit within Jane Roberts' personal frame of reference. As may be checked by a comparison with the books she published under her own name,[20] this frame of reference consisted of a highly eclectic combination of religious and non-religious symbolic systems. They included the Romantic cosmology and evolutionism of the American Transcendentalists, the "positive thinking" of the New Thought movement and related traditions usually referred to as the American "Metaphysical Movements," spiritualism and parapsychology in the wake of magnetism and American mesmerism, but also science fiction literature,

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see Arthur Hastings, *With the Tongues of Men and Angels: A Study of Channeling*, Fort Worth 1991.

[19] For an excellent recent study, see Michael F. Brown, *The Channeling Zone: American Spirituality in an Anxious Age*, Cambridge, Mass. and London 1997.

[20] See, for example, Jane Roberts, *The God of Jane: A Psychic Manifesto*, New York 1981.

popular science, and popular psychology. From the elements of all these symbolic systems, Jane Roberts — or Seth — created a new, original synthesis.

The Seth teachings evidently qualify as "religion" in terms of my definition. But they evidently do not constitute *a* religion, nor are they rooted in a religion as was the case with Boehme. They are clearly an example of a spirituality, however: they are the product of individual manipulation of existing symbolic systems (religious as well as non-religious). This spirituality fulfilled the function which it still fulfills in the context of the New Age movement today: it influences human action by providing the possibility for maintaining contact between the everyday world and a more general "meta-empirical" framework of meaning. It is therefore undoubtedly religion.

I should add one important note. In both the examples just given, we are dealing with the spectacular products of unquestionably gifted individuals, whose published writings made such an impression on readers that their spirituality (or elements of it) was adopted by others and took on a life of its own. But when talking of "spiritualities" we should definitely not think merely or even mainly of the comparatively rare phenomenon of "religious virtuosi". In principle we are dealing with a common everyday phenomenon: every person who gives an individual twist to existing religious symbols (be it only in a minimal sense) is already engaged in the practice of creating his or her own spirituality. In this sense, each existing religion *generates* multiple spiritualities as a matter of course, and it is only the more spectacular cases which sometimes become the basis for a new spiritual tradition.

"Spiritualities" and "religions" might be roughly characterized as the individual and institutional poles within the general domain of "religion". A religion without spiritualities is impossible to imagine. But, as will be seen, the reverse — a spirituality without a religion — is quite possible in principle. Spiritualities can emerge on the basis of an existing religion, but they can very well do without. New Age is the example *par excellence* of this latter possibility: a complex of spiritualities which emerges on the foundation of a pluralistic secular society.

3. Secularization

Above, I have repeatedly used terms such as "secular" and "secularization," and it is important to define precisely what I mean and do not mean by them. Not very long ago, it was widely assumed that religion's days were numbered. As science and rationality took the place of faith, religion would become obsolete; it would largely or completely die out, or at the very least lose its social significance. While such ideas may still be encountered from time to time, it has become increasingly clear that they are the product of wishful thinking on the part of convinced secularists. The weight of evidence demonstrates quite clearly that, regardless of how one defines "religion," it remains fully alive and shows no signs of vanishing. If "secularization" is taken to mean the decline and disappearance of religion, it is clearly a myth. The secularization thesis may be reformulated, however, in a way which is perfectly in accord with the facts: under the impact of a series of pervasive historical and social processes since the 18th century, religion is in the process of *changing* its face in a quite radical fashion. It is not vanishing, but is being transformed under the impact of new circumstances.

It might be argued that this is hardly anything new. No religion has ever been static. There has always been change and transformation, and secularization might therefore be regarded as merely another stage in the history of religion in western societies. However, I will suggest that the transformation of religion under the impact of secularization is more than that. I believe it to be a historically unique and unprecedented process, representing a more profound historial caesura than any other transformation known to us from history. I will not discuss here the highly complex combination of *causes* of this phenomenon, which has been underway most clearly since the 18th century; there is an abundant historical and sociologial literature on the subject. For my present purpose, it suffices to define the process of secularization as

> the whole of historical developments in western society, as a result of which the Christian religion has lost its central position as the foundational collective symbolism of western culture, and has been reduced to merely one among several

religious institutions within a culture which is no longer grounded in a religious system of symbols.

In passing, I note that this process has obviously affected non-western societies as well; but the complications of that process may be disregarded here. What I am concerned with is defining as clearly as possible in which respects contemporary western society is different from all other societies prior to the Enlightenment. It seems to me that the answer is clear: as far as we know, there has never been a human society whose general and collectively shared culture was not religious. In other words, there has never before been a society whose collective symbolism was not of such a kind as to provide possibilities for people to maintain contact with a larger, more general meta-empirical framework of meaning. Precisely such a non-religious complex of symbolic systems, however, is characteristic of contemporary society.[21]

What does this mean in the context of my distinction between religions and spiritualities? Secularization does not mean that religion is vanishing or that religions are dying out; but it does mean that religion as such is radically changing its face. The essence of this process, I suggest, lies in the fact that religion is becoming less and less the domain of religions, and more and more the domain of spiritualities.

Obviously, to state that religion is increasingly individualized is nothing new. Several decades ago, Peter Berger explained how religion in contemporary western society has become a matter of a conscious choice instead of being a natural dimension of daily experience.[22] This is the case even in a country such as the United States of America, whose inhabitants (other than those of the Netherlands) claim in

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[21] Cf. Wouter J. Hanegraaff, "La fin de l'ésotérisme? Le mouvement du Nouvel Age et la question du symbolisme religieux," "La fin de l'ésotérisme? Le mouvement du nouvel âge et la question du symbolisme religieux," in: *Symboles et mythes dans les mouvements initiatiques et ésotériques (17ème-20ème siecle)*, Paris: Archè Edidit/La Table d'Emeraude 1999, 128-147.

[22] Peter Berger, *The Heretical Imperative: Contemporary Possibilities of Religious Affirmation*, London 1980.

overwhelming majority to believe in God. This "choosing for religion" may take various forms. One may choose to participate in an existing religion or, if one has been brought up in one, to continue participating. The religion in question may be a Christian church, but it might also be one of the numerous "new religious movements" or cults which are active in contemporary society. And, of course, any existing religion may spawn new spiritualities in turn, i.e. whenever individuals make new and creative use of existing symbolic systems. Essentially, this is how all religion (and not just New Age religion) functions in a pluralistic and secular society.

Nevertheless, in the context of the process of secularization the nature of New Age religion is a special and radical one. Before attempting to explain in what sense this is so, I will first summarize my argument up to this point. Before the period of the Enlightenment, rather than Christianity being a religion within the more general context of western culture, that culture as a whole was religious. This is why the "Christian spirituality" of an esotericist such as Jacob Boehme is naturally rooted in his religion. He gave his own, personal twist to a system of symbols for which he had never been forced to make a conscious choice, but which, from the outset, provided the context of his very thoughts and experiences. As a result of complex secularization processes, western society is now no longer based upon a religious system of symbols but on a non-religious one (or, rather, several of them). Within that context, *all* religion — whether as "religions" or as "spiritualities" — has become a matter of individual choice. Likewise, Christianity is no longer what it was during most of its history. From providing a general context within which it was possible for people to make individual creative choices, Christianity has itself become merely one possible option among many.

The crucial characteristic of New Age religion, I suggest, is that it consists of a complex of spiritualities which are no longer embedded in any religion — as was the case with all spiritualities from the past — but directly in secular culture itself. All manifestations of New Age religion, without exception, are based upon what I have called an "individual manipulation of existing symbolic systems". In this

way, new syntheses are continually being created, providing the very thing which religion has always provided: the possibility for ritually maintaining contact with a more general meta-empirical framework of meaning, in terms of which people give sense to their experiences in daily life.

Spiritualities in a traditional religious context did not need to start from scratch. The religion in which they were embedded *already* served to provide meaning. The primary function of new spiritualities was to clarify and flesh out existing religious symbolism, so as to "fine tune" it to the specific needs of the person in question. Hence, Jacob Boehme certainly did not develop his esoteric system because he doubted that Christ had saved humanity from sin — he did it in order to better understand what that meant.

New Age spiritualities, in contrast, are not rooted in any existing religion. They are based upon the individual manipulation of religious *as well as* non-religious symbolic systems, and this manipulation is undertaken in order to fill these symbols with new religious meaning. As far as existing religious symbolic systems are concerned, New Age spiritualities generally concentrate on whatever is *not* associated too closely with the traditional churches and their theologies. Hence their preference for alternative traditions, from gnosticism and western esotericism in their own culture to various religious traditions from other cultures. As far as their use of non-religious symbolic systems is concerned, by far the most important area is that of popular "mythologies of science".[23] In countless ways, New Agers give a spiritual twist to the symbolism of quantum mechanics and the theory of relativity,[24] various psychological schools,[25] sociological theories,[26] and so on. The common basis of New Age religion is, therefore, no longer the symbolic system of an existing religion but a large number of symbolic systems of various provenance, bits and pieces of which are constantly

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[23] Cf. Hanegraaff, "La fin de l'ésotérisme".

[24] Hanegraaff, *New Age Religion*, chs. 3 & 6 (esp. 128-151).

[25] Hanegraaff, *New Age Religion*, chs. 2, 8 & 15 (esp. 482-513).

[26] Hanegraaff, *New Age Religion*, ch. 5.

being recycled by the popular media. Since there is no longer a commonly shared source of authority which indicates how all this information fits together within a religious framework, everybody is left to his or her own devices for figuring out the religious implications of available symbolic systems. At most, they may find assistance in the products of a continuous stream of popular literature which, however, does not follow one clear direction either.

As such, New Age is the manifestation *par excellence* of the secularization of religion: religion becomes solely a matter of individual choice and detaches itself from religious institutions, that is, from exclusive commitment to specific "religions". In addition, what is considered to be *real* religion according to a New Age perspective is hardly compatible (if at all) with religious institutions. Here, as in many other things, New Age religion reveals itself as a typical product of the Enlightenment tradition. A consistent refrain in New Age sources is that man has finally managed to free himself from the tyranny of religious power structures; "religions" are perceived as being based upon blind acceptance of dogmas, which have long prevented the faithful from discovering the divinity that resides within themselves.

In this context, one is reminded of a passage written by Émile Durkheim early in the present century. Durkheim defined religion as a social institution; in other words, he made no distinction between religion and religions. He believed that in this way he could accomodate all the *existing* forms of religion, but he also realized that new forms of religion were in the process of emerging which were no longer embodied in social institutions and for which, therefore, his own theory of religion would no longer be sufficient.[27] His words sound like a veritable prophecy of the New Age movement. Durkheim speaks of "individual religions that the individual institutes for himself and celebrates for himself alone," and he foresees a time when "the only cult will be the one that each person freely practices in his innermost self". Such a new form of religion, he predicts, "would consist entirely of

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[27] Émile Durkheim, *Les formes élémentaires de la vie religieuse: Le système totémique en Australie* (1912), repr. Paris 1960, 63-65.

interior and subjective states and be freely construed by each one of us".[28]

4. New Age: Secular Religion

This new form of religion has indeed arrived. Durkheim foresaw it already at the beginning of the 20th century, and it is time for the historical and social significance of the phenomenon to be recognized more widely. In academic circles and elsewhere, one may still perceive a tendency to dismiss New Age religion as a mere temporary fashion which will no doubt vanish of its own accord. It becomes increasingly difficult to maintain such an attitude when the "fashion" shows no signs of disappearing. But more importantly, it betrays a certain blindness to what is happening *structurally* to religion in contemporary society. If New Age is a passing fad, then where are New Agers expected to turn once the fashion is over? Will they, at long last, embrace the consistently non-religious worldview (with or without a "God-is-dead" theology) which intellectuals have been predicting for so long? This expectation merely reflects yet another superseded ideology of secular progress: to the best of my knowledge, nothing indicates (or has ever indicated) that normal, ordinary people are particularly eager for a worldview which will prevent them from perceiving a deeper meaning in their everyday lives. Or will New Agers return to the fold of the traditional churches and a communal faith? This would require a true *deus ex machina*, since existing social realities and the internal logic of development both point towards an individualistic turning away from traditional religious institutions against the background of a continuing demand for religious meaning. What is more, such turning away is not necessarily inconsistent with continued church participation; as I will argue, it may also take the form of an *innere Emigration* within the churches themselves.

Certainly, many observers (the present author not excluded) would have preferred a consistently secular type of religion to have turned

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[28] Translation according to É. Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*, Karen E. Fields, transl., New York 1995.

out to be a bit more profound than *The Celestine Prophecy* or the spirituality of Shirley MacLaine. But given the course of developments since the period of the Enlightenment, precisely this type of pop religion is what could have been expected all along. Combining my argument so far with the analysis of New Age ideas which I have provided elsewhere (and only summarized here), I come to the following conclusion.

New Age is, first of all, a clear and consistent manifestation of secular religion. It provides the possibility for people to construe a spirituality according to their own individual preferences, within the context of a culturally pluralistic society. I have argued that we are not dealing merely with a general emphasis on individualization, but with a unique and unprecedented phenomenon: for the very first time in history, spiritualities are detaching themselves entirely from specific existing religions and are starting to lead their own lives within the context of a non-religious society.

Secondly, it is only to be expected that such a type of individualized religion should place the emphasis on personal inner experience. It is, therefore, not just by chance that New Age takes its inspiration from western esoteric traditions with their emphasis on gnosis, especially in their modern occultist form. On the one hand, we may observe a turning away from everything associated with traditional dogmatic theology and church institutions. This tendency is undeniable not only in view of the decline in church attendance, but may also (and perhaps even more clearly) be observed among those who nevertheless wish to remain part of a church. On the other hand, the search for meaning based upon intuition, transcending the senses and the rational mind, reflects an equally strong pattern of criticism with respect to everything associated with a purely rationalist scientific worldview (including an over-rationalist theology). Since both the dominant pillars of western culture — for the sake of brevity, let me refer to them as "reason" and "faith" — are therefore being rejected, it is natural for New Agers to search for alternatives in a "universal gnosis," believed to have

been marginalized by the culturally dominant institutions.[29] Western esoteric traditions do indeed tend to emphasize personal experience as the foundation of true religion. If these esoteric traditions are perceived through an "occultist" mirror (i.e. reflecting the characteristic 19th-century idea of gnosis as a higher synthesis of religion and science) they may suddenly seem tailor-made for the needs of contemporary people.

5.   A case study: "Nieuwe tijdsdenken" and New Age

My last formulation contains an intentional edge of reservation. As noted above, popular New Age perceptions of western esoteric traditions are usually far removed from what these traditions represented in historical reality. Let us take a look at one specific example.

In recent years, an interesting current has developed within the Dutch mainstream churches, consisting of people who feel connected to the Christian tradition but who emphasize the need for a dialogue with New Age. Representatives refer to their perspective as *nieuwe tijdsdenken* (i.e., the literal Dutch translation of "new age thinking," as opposed to the English term which is standardly used as an Anglicism in the Dutch language), and usually claim that this is something very different from New Age. However, I see little reason for viewing *nieuwe tijdsdenken* as other than a convenient term for indicating how New Age thinking manifests itself in the specific context of the Christian churches. Given this context, *nieuwe tijdsdenkers* place an understandable emphasis on recovering forgotten "spiritual alternatives" in the history of Christianity. The successful Dutch author Jacob Slavenburg, for example, writes book after book devoted to the battle against gnosticism in the early centuries, the suppression of the Cathars in the Middle Ages, and about some later esoteric currents in the history of

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[29] For a theoretical discussion of the problematics of this three-part typology, cf. Wouter J. Hanegraaff, "A Dynamic Typological Approach to the Problem of 'Post-Gnostic' Gnosticism," *ARIES* 16 (1992), 5-43.

Christianity.[30] The pervasive theme of such literature is the implacable opposition between the peaceful faith of true "spiritual Christians" on the one hand, and the violent intolerance of church institutions and dogmatic theologians on the other. The message is that Christians must find their way back to the essence of the Christian message, which is to be found not in religious institutions and dogmatic beliefs but in the intuitive "knowledge of the heart".

The picture presented by *nieuwe tijdsdenkers* does contain a kernel of truth. It is well-known that gnostics, mystics and esotericists have often found themselves in conflict with the representatives of socially dominant forms of Christianity, and have usually been the losing party in these confrontations. Since the history of these internal Christian conflicts is not a pretty one, it is quite natural to be sympathetic towards the victims of religious intolerance. In addition, there is certainly reason to take a more serious look at their views than has been done in the past. But that being said, we cannot but observe that the defenders of *nieuwe tijdsdenken* evince the same type of dualistic thinking which they criticize in their opponents. Traditional theological narratives describe the history of Christianity as practically synonymous with the history of the churches; the history of heresies tends to be presented in dualist fashion as a battle of light against darkness, the true gospel against the error of gnosis. The narrator's party is idealized and its representatives tend to be presented in a halo of sanctity, whereas the losing party is demonized and hardly gets a chance to make its own voice heard. As an alternative to such one-sided narratives, *nieuwe tijdsdenkers* now present an equally dualistic one: the true "spiritual Christians" are consistently idealized in their heroic resistance against the error of religious power structures, rigid dogmas and ruthless theologians.

Of course, historiography for *nieuwe tijdsdenkers* is less a goal in itself than a means to an end. The underlying motivation is to stimulate a broad change of mentality within the churches under the banner

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[30] See for example J. Slavenburg, *De verloren erfenis*, Utrecht 1993; and cf. my critical review "Slavenburg doet historische waarheid geweld aan," *Trouw* 21.6.1993.

of a newly-discovered "gnosis". Given these priorities, it is hardly surprising that representatives are not terribly interested in precise analyses in which the relationship between the Christian religion and Christian spiritualities is described with all the nuances required by such complex subject matter.

Nevertheless, it is precisely this relationship which needs to be explored. I suggest that in current discussions about *nieuwe tijdsdenken* (and, I suspect, in similar discussions taking place in other European countries than the Netherlands), all the parties involved overlook the fundamental difference between "spiritualities" which function within a traditional religious context on the one hand, and those which function within a secular context on the other. It seems to me to be of the utmost importance to recognize that a seemingly unproblematic term such as "Christian spirituality" (which is frequently invoked in these discussions) may mean two very different things which should not be confused: it may mean a spirituality rooted in the symbolic system of Christianity, but it may also mean a spirituality which makes use of Christian terminology to give shape to a form of secular religion. Precisely this is the gap between (to stick to my examples) the "Christian spirituality" of Jacob Boehme and the one defended by New Age admirers. This gap can emphatically not be bridged merely by stating that both attach such great importance to personal religious experience as a path to spiritual insight. Such a statement merely formulates the greatest common divider but does not say anything specific about the perspectives of either Christian spirituality or contemporary forms of Christian New Age spirituality. As soon as we take a closer look at the latter, the differences turn out to be at least as important as the similarities.

I am therefore quite sceptical about the ease with which *nieuwe tijdsdenkers* expect their perspective to be sufficient to lay the foundations of a revitalization of Christian spirituality. But neither am I very happy with the attitude of disinterest that seems to be typical of most academic theologians. The latter tend to persist in looking at New Age as a marginal phenomenon which may conveniently be ignored since it has no connection with "real" theology or "real" Christianity. I do not

intend to deny the kernel of truth in this; as an empirical historian of religions I cannot and do not (nor do I have any wish to) claim to know how to distinguish "true" from "false" theology or Christianity, but it is certainly true that there are profound and far-reaching differences between what each party understands by true and false Christianity. Psychologically (and politically) it may be understandable that academic theologians prefer to concentrate on what they regard as true Christianity and true theology; but if they choose to do so, they will eventually have to face up to the consequences. These consequences consist of an increasing alienation from what an important and growing section of ordinary believers understands by "Christianity". The frequent outcome of such alienation is a sort of *innere Emigration*, which may easily be underestimated precisely because of its individual emphasis and inner-directedness. The academic theologian who visits a Sunday church service may be reassured by the impression that not too many things seem to have changed; but this impression is deceptive. If he could read the minds of the churchgoers, he would find that many of them are playing, although to various extents, with ideas for which his professional training has never prepared him: beliefs about reincarnation and karma, angels as spiritual messengers and helpers, paranormal assistance from the divine world, new channeled revelations such as those of the apostle Paul directed to the Dutch churches, newly-discovered gnostic gospels, Celestine prophecies, and a whole complex of ideas and assumptions intimately connected with them.

I will repeat my main thesis once again. It may be tempting to dismiss this type of religion as a mere fashion which will pass away of its own accord, or to ignore it because we cannot and do not want to take it seriously. But, in reality, what we are dealing with is the way in which secular religion manifests itself in the context of the Christian churches. This is a phenomenon too important to be passed over lightly.

6. Conclusion

The so-called "challenge of secularization" has long been taken seriously by academics concerned with religion in the modern world,

but many of them still tend to understand it primarily as concerning the opposition between Christianity and a non-religious view of life. This is an outdated perception of the problem. The emergence of New Age religion shows how secularization itself generates an entirely new type of religion, which may superficially resemble older traditions but is actually based upon brandnew foundations. This makes New Age religion into a crucial phenomenon, which students of contemporary religion will ignore at their peril.

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DIASPORA: GENEALOGIES OF SEMANTICS AND TRANSCULTURAL COMPARISON

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Undeniably, the ancient notion "diaspora" has become a fashionable term. Once exclusively used in a context-bound way, that of Jewish history and the plight of Jewish people being dispersed 'among the nations', in late 20th century the folk term became generalized on a grand scale. Since the 1970s, "diaspora" was increasingly used to denote almost every people living far away from their ancestral or former homeland. For example, in his seminal article on "Mobilized and Proletarian Diasporas", John Armstrong applied the term straightforwardly, "to any ethnic collectivity which lacks a territorial base within a given polity" (1976: 393). For Armstrong, a geographic or cultural point of identificational reference, placed outside the given polity, forms no characterizing feature of "diaspora". Armstrong's equation of "diaspora" with a migrant group comprising "a relatively small minority throughout all portions of the polity" (1976: 393), paved the way, at least within the political sciences, to spread the term rapidly.

Certainly, however, the popularity, even current celebrity of the diaspora notion does not rely on one article only. As shall be sketched out below, the term was already adopted in African Studies since the mid-1960s. More importantly for the term's academic take-over and increasing use had been previous changes in the political and legal sphere in various industrialized nation states. The coming-into-effect of new immigration laws or labour recruitment schemes during the 1960s were followed by at times massive influxes of migrants from Asia and elsewhere to North America, Europe and Australia. In addition, migration to former colonial power states and flight of millions of refugees further enhanced the ethnic and religious diversity of Western nation states. In contrast to widespread assumptions of a rapid as-

similation or expected remigration, many, often most migrants opted to stay for long. They began to build their own social, economic and religious institutions in their adopted country of residence. Some migrant groups achieved an "institutional completeness"[1] fairly quickly and efficiently, reconstructing known customs and bonds in their new environment.

In order to conceptually map and categorize these both new and persistent national, cultural or religious groups of people and their institutions, researchers progressively employed the old idea of "diaspora". For scholars in various disciplines of the humanities the term seemed perfect to sociologically capture the group-related institutionalisation and the evolving multicultural society. In addition, the term's emotion-laden connotations of uprootedness, precariousness and homesickness provided explanations for the group's enduring and nostalgic loyalty to the cultural and religious traditions of the country of origin. The term "diaspora", once freed from its restriction to Jewish history and experience, came more and more into use to refer to any processes of dispersion and to relate to countless so-called dislocated, de-territorialized communities.[2]

Obviously, migration of ethnic, national or religious groups of people to new territories is not restricted to modern or post modern times. As an obiquitous phenomenon, travel, re-settlement and becoming established in culturally foreign lands is a well known fact and phenomenon in the history of religions and peoples. In contrast to earlier periods, rapidly improved modes of conveyance and communication have enabled a much easier exchange of commodities, ideas and people. In the thus denoted "Global Period of world history" (Smart 1987: 291), the maintenance of close links with the country and kinsmen of emigration is no longer restricted to scarce contacts. Rather, transnational

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[1] Quote Breton 1964: 200. Interestingly, Breton does not use the diaspora term.

[2] See Tölölyan 1996: 3. Tölölyan provides a comprehensive list of twelve reasons for what he calls the "proliferation and valorization of diasporas" (1996: 19), see 20-28.

and transcontinental communication is possible in a historically unprecedented intensity, scope and speed.[3]

Based on this reconstruction, "diaspora" seems to be the right notion at the right time. However, the abundant use went hand in hand with the term's semantic dissolution. In view of this, part 1 shall recall 'basics of disapora' to shed light on the once existent meaning. Such a reconsideration seems even more justified as new etymological derivations of "diaspora" have been suggested. Part 2 shall follow up the ensuing semantic changes, both of the term's adoption by early Christianity and of its take-off within the humanities since the 1960s. Based on this, part 3 opts to conceptualize "diaspora" as an analytical category, thus enabling the term to both qualify situations and constellations and serve as a basis for transcultural, comparative work.

Genealogies of semantics: origin and coinage of the term "diaspora"

The history of the semantics of "diaspora" points to several changes of the term's meaning. As is fairly well known, "diaspora" is a Greek term. The noun διασπορά is a derivation from the Greek composite verb "dia-" and "speirein" (διασπείρειν, infinitive), adopting meanings of "to scatter", "to spread" or "to disperse". Based on this etymology, sociologist Robin Cohen suggested that "the expression was used to describe the colonization of Asia Minor and the Mediterranean in the Archaic period (800-600 BC)."[4] During the Archaic period, colonies (Greek *apoikía*) were purposefully set up by city states (*mētrópolis*), faithfully transferring administrative and religious institutions and patterns to non-Greek regions (amongst many, Buckley 1996). Such a derivation would enable scholars to attribute a non-Jewish origin

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[3] Features of past and present transnational exchange have been discussed by Rudolph and Piscatori 1997 and Foner 1997; see also the theme issue of *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, Vol. 22 (2) 1999.

[4] Cohen 1997: 2. Cohen repeats this attribution several times in his otherwise praiseworthy *Global Diasporas*, see 1997: ix, 24, 25, 83, 177. Cohen's suggestion is already taken up by other authors, see McKeown 1999: 308. Aaron Segal seems to have been the first to suggest this derivation of the diaspora term (1993: 82).

to the earliest application of the term and thus abandon "the strong entailment of Jewish history on the language of diaspora" (Clifford 1994: 306). The suggestion, however, appears at best fanciful. It cannot be maintained in the context of historical and semantic facts. The verb, which became more widely used in the fifth century BCE (not earlier) amongst classical philosophers and Hellenist writers, had a negative connotation. It implied processes of dispersion and decomposition, a dissolution into various parts (e.g., atoms) without any further relation to each other (as used by Epicurus, reported by Plutarch). On the whole, "diaspora" had an "unfavourable, disastrous meaning" and was in no way used to imply a geographic place or sociological group, as Willem C. van Unnik underscores (1993: 86-87). The term was definitely *not* used by any classical author to refer to the Archaic colonisation process. In fact, the verb expressed the exact opposite of the close relation, characteristically lasting for centuries, between a Greek colony and its mother city.

The Alexandrian Jewish-Greek translators of the Hebrew scriptures adopted precisely the disastrous connotations of current philosophical discourse. However, in the evolved Septuagint, διασπορά (*diasporá*) and διασπείρειν (*diaspeírein*) were coined as *termini technici* to interpret Jewish existence far from the "Promised Land" in light of an encompassing soteriological pattern.[5] As a matter of fact, surprisingly, the Hebrew words for "exile", "banishment," and "deportation", *gôlā* and *galût*, were *not* rendered into Greek by "diaspora". *Gôlā* and *galût* were understood as "special biblical terms for the Babylonian captivity", as Aiyenakun Arowele specifies (1977: 46). They were thus translated in the Septuagint by Greek words denoting "exile", "captivity", "deportation". Arowele stresses that "Hellenistic Jews avoided making an equivalence between Gola and 'diaspora'" (1977: 47), thus purposefully differentiating between these terms, as Davies

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[5] In the Septuagint, the noun διασπορά is used twelve times and the verb διασπείρειν more than forty times. These are translated from various Hebrew nouns respectively twelve different Hebrew verbs. On the specific locations and their context see in detail Arowele 1977: 29-45, van Unnik 1993: 92-105, Tromp 1998: 15-22.

(1982: 116) and van Unnik (1993: 81-84) likewise emphasize. Why did Jewish-Greek translators of the third and second century BCE intentionally distinguish between *galût* and *diaspora*, adopting a new word to neologically express their situation of living outside Palestine or *Eretz Israel*?

In retrospect, post-Babylonian Jews theologically interpreted the Babylonian captivity as God's punishment for their disobedience to the commands of the Torah. With the return to Palestine and Jerusalem in the late sixth century BCE, this punishment had come to an end. Living outside the "Holy Land" subsequently — that is, from the fifth century BCE on — was understood differently. It was not an imposed punishment for breaking the laws of God. It involved no "deportation" as denoted by the Hebrew terms *gôlā* and *galût*. These terms were translated in the Septuagint by αἰχμαλωσία (*aichmalosía*, captivity by war), μετοικεσία (*metoikesía*, moving under force), and other terms. In post-Babylonian centuries, Jews left the Palestine region for economic reasons, to serve as soldiers in Egypt or as traders and businessmen throughout the Eastern Mediterranean coast. Also, only a minority of the Judean upper classes exiled to Babylon had returned to Palestine. The majority had become well integrated into Babylonian society, while still maintaining their Jewish observance. During the fifth to first century BCE, numerous Jews fled from Palestine, mainly to escape war, socio-political insecurity, and repression. Although many Jews were quite successful and voluntary economic migrants, they interpreted residing outside Palestine as a transitory, miserable, and unfavourable stay. It was understood as a preparation, an intermediate situation until the final divine gathering in Jerusalem. Fundamentally, the term took on spiritual and soteriological meanings, pointing to the "gathering of the scattered" by God's grace at the end of time. "Diaspora" turns out to be an integral part of a pattern constituted by the fourfold course of sin or disobedience, scattering and exile as punishment, repentance, and finally return and gathering.[6]

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[6] See van Unnik 1993: 113-119, 134; likewise Davies 1982: 116-121 and Tromp 1998: 18-19.

In Hellenistic times, Jews were able to travel to Palestine and Jerusalem. The large number of pilgrims gives ample evidence of this fact. They could have returned and settled in Palestine. Most stayed, however, in the diaspora. Why? Theologically, it was held that the gathering in the "Holy Land" was not to be brought about by men, but by God alone. As Davies clarifies: "If the return were an act of divine intervention, it could not be engineered or forced by political or any other human means: to do so would be impious" (1982: 120). The only activity men and women were able to undertake in the diaspora was to live wholeheartedly in accordance with the commands of the Torah, in order to possibly bring about the final gathering a little earlier. In this way, apart from the indissoluble soteriological meaning and context, i.e. the interpretation of history with respect to God's saving grace, the proper term also takes on meanings of admonition and a reminder to obey the Torah. Socio-culturally, it appears that quite a number of Jews (certainly not all) fared rather well in cultural centers; the Jews of Alexandria or Sardis maintained religious and administrative structures of their own, acquiring an 'institutional completeness' with synagogues, gymnasia, baths, cemeteries and societies.Many preferred to stay in the diaspora, rather than returning to more or less regularly war-torn Palestine.[7]

Ensuing changes of diaspora semantics: co-optation and popularization

Since the neologism by Jewish translators, the diaspora term was used by Jews and Judaic scholars alike to refer to Jews who lived outside the "Promised Land". Its usage encompassed the geographic, sociological, and soteriological semantics as summarized by van Unnik:

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[7] Studies on Early Judaism and Hellenist Jews amount to legion; see, amongst very many, Delling 1987, Cohen and Frerichs 1993, Barclay 1996, Gafni 1997. A 'must' on the diaspora term's origin and coinage is the examination by the late Dutch Old Testament scholar Willem Cornelis van Unnik on the self-understanding of the Jewish Diaspora in Hellenistic Roman Times (1993). The painstaking analysis dates back to 1966-67 and was posthumously edited and published by Peter W. van der Horst. The thorough discussion is written — unfortunate for many — in German.

"διασπορά interprets not only the land, across which one is dispersed, but also the activity of dispersion as well as the people, who are dispersed."[8] This semantic particularity became the established version for the two millennia to follow, although a further meaning came to the fore as Christianity developed its boundaries and identificational focus.

In the first century CE, Christians adopted the term, but altered its soteriological meaning according to Christian eschatology. The New Testament uses the noun *diasporá* and the verb *diaspeírein* three times each. Without going into detail on the complicated usages, the individual writers of the different Biblical stories and letters interpreted the early Church "as a pilgrim, sojourning and dispersed community, in the understanding that it is the eschatological people of God" (Arowele 1977: 476). On earth, Christians living in dispersion would function as the "seed" to disseminate the message of Jesus. The Christians' real home, however, was the "heavenly city Jerusalem", the goal of Christian pilgrimage.[9]

In the same vein, patristic writers co-opted for the diaspora notion as a polemical device in their attacks against Judaism in the first centuries CE: in the Christian view, the dispersion of Jews after the destruction of the Second Temple was a punishment exercised by the Christian God for the Jews' adopted 'non-pure' way of life and their non-recognition of Jesus as Messiah. On purpose, the Jewish soteriological concept was shorn of its aspects of redemption and return by Christian polemics. The fourfold scheme remained left with its aspects of sin and dispersion only, emphasizing the connotation of divine judgement.

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[8] Quote van Unnik 1993: 149, translated by this author. As for the use of "diaspora" in secular Greek language, primarily restricted to philosophical discourse (e.g. by Plutarch) as outlined before, see van Unnik 1993: 74-76 and Modrzejewski 1993: 66-67.

[9] The three locations using the noun are James 1,1; 1 Petr 1,1, and John 7,35; the verb is used in the Acta Apostolorum 8,1; 8,4 and 8,11; for the controversely discussed New Testament passages see, among many, Arowele 1977: part 2, Schnackenburg 1971 and Krüger 1994.

The notion of a sojourning people of God quickly vanished in Christian reasoning and treatises, as the one-time minority religion changed to become the established church in the late fourth century. The eschatological meanings became forgotten. A millennium later, the term came into use again, primarily employed as a geographic-sociological signifier. In the course of the Reformation and Counter-Reformation, "diaspora" denoted Protestant minorities having emerged in Roman Catholic environments, and Roman Catholic minorities being faced with living in Protestant dominated countries. In the early 19th century, in the wake of the Napoleonic wars, this coinage of a certain confessional church residing in a confessionally different environment became the more widely used and standard understanding of diaspora in Christian terms.[10]

Despite the religious differences between Jewish and Christian diaspora semantics, geographic and sociological connotations are basic to both usages. Surveying in a theoretically interested perspective, Judaic studies and the Christian theologies, almost all studies of Jewish and Christian dispersion and diaspora (confessional) communities have remained and still remain historically descriptive, often supplemented by some theological and pastoral interpretations. The studies do not aim to undertake analytical, comparative, or theoretical research. Indeed, most scholars in Judaic and Christian theological studies have not even noticed the present popularity and wide usage of the term outside their disciplines.

Looking back, until the 1960s, the diaspora term was distinctly confined to the histories of Jewish and Christian traditions and their diaspora communities.[11] The dislogding and semantic broadening of

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[10] With regard to the post-Reformation reuse of the term, see the detailed study by Röhrig 1991 and the overview by Schellenberg 1995. Altermatt provides an instructive historical case study of the developments and changes of a confessional diaspora minority, that of Catholics in Protestant Zurich (Switzerland) in 1850-1950.

[11] An exception to this rule is Dubnow's excellent entry on "diaspora" in the 1931 edition of the *Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences*. Certainly a literature archaeology would bring to the fore a number of early non-Jewish and non-Christian related employments of the term, although primarily of accidental use. For example,

the thus specifically employed notion has been undertaken first within African Studies. In a now classic paper, George Shepperson suggested the concept of the "African diaspora" (1966). Analogous to the expulsion of Jews in early times, the dispersion of sub-Saharan Africans through the colonial slave trade was described as an enforced expatriation, accompanied by a longing to return to the homeland. Shepperson's metaphorical usage bundled up into one comprehensive statement the at that time current interest among English and American writers, artists and scholars studying the exiled black peoples' experience as an aspect of African history. The taking up of the Jewish folk term in English-speaking circles coincided with African states achieving political independence and African thinkers and writers, both in Africa and abroad, raising their voices and making accusations of racism and discrimination. Although the emergence of interest in an African diaspora concept can be located in the late 1950s to mid-1960s, it took a decade, until a proliferation of related publications gained momentum. Since the mid-1970s, African historians and writers deliberately employ "diaspora" as a concept and topic, thus creating a sub-domain within the broader area of African studies.[12]

Differently, nevertheless in addition to the above mentioned reasons for the adoption of the diaspora term (legal changes; influx of migrants etc.), in the case of African studies, processes of decolonization and of political emancipation, both by nations in Africa and by black peoples

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Shepperson (1993: 48) points to the stipulation of a "Scottish diaspora" in the posthumously published accounts of Sir Reginald Coupland, *Welsh and Scottish Nationalism*, London 1954.

[12] For an overview of the term's emergence and usage within the field, see Shepperson 1993 and Drake 1993; the pioneering role of Black or African Studies in decontextualising and generalizing the diaspora term is highlighted also in Akenson's well-based account, see Akenson 1997: 11. A wide range of monographs with "African diaspora" or "Black diaspora" in its title have emerged since the mid-1970s. The on-line bibliography "Diasporas and Transnational Communities", edited by Robin Cohen in collaboration with the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) Oxford, lists some 200 entries within the category "Africans (including Blacks)", see http://www.transcomm.ox.ac.uk/wwwroot/bibliogr.htm.

in the once 'New World', gave raise to the term's prominence. Long established 'Black communities' outside the African continent became renamed as diasporas. A unity of those once enslaved thus was and is constructed; a mythical relation of all overseas 'Blacks' with an idealized 'Africa' arose; and politically, former and present power relations were pointed out and questioned. In a quantitative analysis of the use of "diaspora" in book titles, Phil Cohen found that "Black and Jewish history or culture are overwhelmingly dominant as the point of reference for diaspora studies" (1998: 3). As such, "the Jewish diaspora has in the last twenty years become effectively Africanised" (1998: 7).

The diaspora term's virtual take-off within African Studies was followed by a boosted usage of "diaspora" in various disciplines of the humanities. Within the political sciences, Armstrong's afore-mentioned 1976 seminal article provided the definitorial basis for various ensuing studies, including Gabriel Sheffer's by now classic work, *Modern Diasporas in International Politics* (1986). In a similar way since the 1980s, scholars in disciplines such as anthropology, linguistics, or history and regional-thematic fields such as Armenian studies, Irish studies or recent Tibetan studies (Korom 1997) to an expanding extent employ the diaspora term to relate to expatriate national, cultural, or religious groups and communities. The generalized and broad usage of "diaspora" became, so to speak, institutionalized with the launching of the high quality journal *Diaspora* in 1991. Editor Khachig Tölölyan declared: "We use 'diaspora' provisionally to indicate our belief that the term that once described Jewish, Greek, and Armenian dispersion now shares meanings with a larger semantic domain that includes words like immigrant, expatriate, refugee, guestworker, exile community, overseas community, ethnic community."[13]

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[13] Quote Tölölyan 1991: 4. This provisional, rather loose definition was markedly substantialized in Tölölyan's brilliant article "Rethinking *Diaspora*(s)" (1996). For studies on those related exile, overseas or diaspora Armenian, Greek, Irish, Kurd, Palestinian, Chinese, Tamil, Indian and many more nationally, culturally or religiously constitued communities, see the synoptical presentations by Safran 1991, Chaliand

Parallel to the growing usage and esteem of "diaspora" in the academia, intellectuals, representatives, spokesmen and spokeswomen of the thus renamed diaspora people and communities started to adopt the notion as a self-description. The term gained a currency among the urban, well-educated elite, which itself often formed an aspiring part of university life. The diaspora term earned acceptance and circulation, be it to construct a unity of an actually heterogenous group of people; be it to emphasize one's claim for representation; be it to call for a retightening of bonds with one's former home culture and country; or be it to serve as an indictment of power relations, past and present being the cause for a group's precarious, socially marginalized situation.[14]

Finally, the adoption of the diaspora term within the history of religions should not go unmentioned. Compared to its neighbouring disciplines, the history of religions was a real latecomer in making use of the diaspora term. The first to point to the "The Importance of Diasporas" had been Ninian Smart in 1987, unfortunately presented in a somewhat hidden contribution. It took until the mid-1990s for the term to be applied with more rigor and from a theoretical perspective (Hinnells 1994, Baumann 1995). Historians of religions, quite aware of earlier experiences of ambiguity in transferring culturally and religiously bound terms, shied away from applying the notion to non-Jewish traditions and peoples. Also, their caution was (and is) in many cases based on the knowledge of the term's origin and soteriological coinage, stirring up various theoretical problems for a cross-cultural, generalized application. Despite this difficulty, on an empirical basis and on ideas proposed by Kim Knott (1991), Hinnells systematizes ten

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and Rageau 1991, Segal 1993: 82-106, Cohen 1997 and the above mentioned on-line bibliography (Cohen n.d.).

[14] A paradigmatic example of the latter use can be found in the article by the Guadeloupese Hindu and intellectual Lotus Vingadassamy-Engel (1992). The author states: "I choose the word 'diaspora' for the transplantation of my community from India to the French West Indies [...] because it carries psychological connotations of deep sorrow and suffering, inconsolable mourning along with the everlasting feeling of being torn inside" (1992: 6).

factors in a diaspora religion's change and continuity, differentiating seven areas of research.[15]

Whereas in the history of religions and more vigorously in its neighbouring disciplines "diaspora" was primarily employed as a geographic-sociological category to denote dispersed groups and transnational relationships, since the 1990s a further, different approach has stepped forth. Post-modernist and culture critical authors such as Stuart Hall, Homi Bhabha, Paul Gilroy and James Clifford adopted the diaspora term to denote a specific type of experience and thinking, i.e. that of "diaspora consciousness". Aspiring to move beyond essentialising notions such as 'ethnicity' and 'race', in often jargon laden papers, the idea of "diaspora" has been celebrated as expressing notions of hybridity, heterogeneity, identity fragmentation and (re)construction, double consciousness, fractures of memory, ambivalence, roots and routes, discrepant cosmopolitanism, multi-locationality and so forth.

This "diaspora consciousness" is conceived as a specific awareness, supposedly a characteristic of people living 'here' and relating to a 'there': "Diaspora consciousness is entirely a product of cultures and histories in collision and dialogue. [...] Diasporic subjects are, thus, distinct versions of modern, transnational, intercultural experience" (Clifford 1994: 319). Similarly, Stuart Hall holds: "Diaspora identities are those which are constantly producing and reproducing themselves anew, through transformation and difference" (1990: 235). Importantly, diaspora consciousness is held to carry a creative power and ability, questioning both "configurations of power" (Brah 1996: 183) and the hegemony of the all-pervasive, normative nation-state. In-

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[15] See Hinnells 1997a and 1997b. Hinnell's expression of "diaspora religion" in the singular appears somewhat strange, for it purports an underlying unity and sameness of the actually most varied religious traditions in diasporic settings. Interestingly, Knott did not use the diaspora term in her 1991 contribution. Indicative for the discipline's non-recognition of the discourse on "diaspora" until the mid-1990s is the missing of a related entry in the established *Encyclopedia of Religion* (1987) or the *Handwörterbuch religionswissenschaftlicher Grundbegriffe* (1988 ff.). In contrast, the 1999 *Metzler Lexikon Religion* provides entries on "diaspora" and "migration" (vol. 1 and 2, Stuttgart: Metzler).

deed, "diaspora" and its attributed awareness is praised as an alternate consciousness, endeavouring to move beyond normative history and politics and enabling access to "recovering non-Western, or not-only-Western, models for cosmopolitian life, nonaligned transnationalities struggling within and against nation-states, global technologies, and markets — resources for a fraught coexistence."[16]

Although growing in number, this famed type of consciousness primarily relates to the still few intellectuals and writers having stepped forth from the diasporic communities. We rather doubt whether the diasporic 'ordinary' men and women think in such categories and subtleties. Nevertheless, the attributed potentiality of diaspora consciousness bespeaks a hope, expectation, and longing which curiously reminds of early semantic fillings of religious hope and ingathering.

"Diaspora" as an analytical category

The semantic broadening of "diaspora", both in terms of relating it to any dispersed group of people and to conceptualize a certain type of consciousness, have made "diaspora" one of *the* most fashionable terms in academic discourse of late 20th century. Authors and writers use the once restricted notion in an arbitrary, unspecified, fairly free way. Apparently, an often plainly metaphorical application of "diaspora" is prevalent, encompassing under the very term a wide range of phenomena considered appropriate. The term's popularity has resulted in a dissolution of semantics, "decomposing" into exactly the early Greek philosophical meaning the notion's ability to encompass certain situations and relations.

In this respect, Tölölyan warns that the term "is in danger of becoming a promiscuously capacious category" (1996: 8). And, as Phil Cohen entertainingly remarked: "Diaspora is one of the buzz words of the post modern age; it has the virtue of sounding exotic while rolling sibilantly off the English tongue; it whispers the promise of hidden

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[16] Quote Clifford 1994: 328. For a portrait and discussion of these understandings of "diaspora", see Cohen 1997: 127-153 and Anthias 1998.

depths of meaning yet assimilates them to the shape of a wave breaking gently on native shores. [. . .] it offers a desirable feminine ending, and much versatility" (1998: 3).

Obviously, the boundaries of "diaspora" have become ever more blurred and confused in its popularization. Certainly there is no lack of ambitious projects to define the term and thus to tighten the semantic boundaries, as carried out by Safran (1991), Hettlage (1991), and Cohen (1997), to name the more systematic and encompassing approaches. It is for the analytical heuristics and capacities that a definitorial specification appears worthwhile, despite the term's overuse. In contrast to proposed definitorial exercises, our approach opts for paying less attention to the noun "diaspora" and to focusing more on the adjective "diasporic". Just as some historians of religions, instead of fruitlessly striving to offer the 348th (or so) definition of "religion", rather choose to elaborate what qualifies a situation, activity, text as "religious" (Seiwert 1981, Gladigow 1988). In this way, we aim to establish the adjectival form "diasporic" as a categorizing qualification. Employing the adjective "diasporic" should qualify certain groups of people, social situations, and transnational or multi-local constellations to encompass specific relations and identificational references. We might ask in the negative in order to gain a better understanding of the specificy: What should be missing in order that certain social forms and constellations are *less* identified or *not* identified as diasporic? In this respect, sociologist Saint-Blancat straightforwardly suggests: "Quand il y a rupture avec l'origine ou assimilation aux contextes d'installation, on ne peut plus parler de diaspora."[17]

Rather than providing a list of defining characteristics and enumerating typologies, our approach emphasizes one specific relation with few components only. This minimal constellation which keeps aloof from extensive ramifications, serves as the working basis from which

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[17] Quote Saint-Blancat 1995: 10. Furthermore, both Clifford (1994: 307-310, on diaspora's borders) and Tölölyan (1996: 16-19, on ethnic versus diasporic) have offered insightful suggestions for such an approach.

further relations follow up and around which prototypical character-
istics can be grouped. We comply with Brian Smith who holds that
"to define is not to finish, but to start. To define is not to confine, but
to create something to refine — and eventually redefine. To define,
finally, is not to destroy but to construct for the purpose of useful re-
flection" (1987: 33). Taken as a thus understood working definition,
the religious implications of "diaspora" are bracketed and emphasis is
placed on its geographic-sociological aspects. As such, the relational
facts of a *perpetual recollecting identification with a fictitious or far
away existent geographic territory and its cultural-religious traditions*
are taken as diaspora constitutive. If this identificational recollection
or rebinding, expressed in symbolic or material ways, is missing, a sit-
uation and social form shall not be called "diasporic". Importantly, a
diasporic "colouring" or dimension is not a quality per se, but a nom-
inalistic assignment attributed by the scholar or the member of the di-
aspora community.

The definition places emphasis on the enduring, often glorifying
identification of a group of people with a cultural-religious point of
reference outside the current country of living. It is this identificational
focus which in biblical terms 'gathers the dispersed' (Jer 32,37-38) and
forms their specific collective identity. Prototypically, that is in most,
but not all cases, this situation came about by a migration process.
More often than not it involves an identificational difference of the
diaspora group in contrast with the society's dominant cultural and
religious norms and orientations. This difference, a cultural-religious
identification bound to a region and culture outside the current country
of residence, constitutes an important aspect of the fundamental tripo-
lar interrelatedness of diaspora group, country of origin and country
of residence. Finally, in contrast to most definitions, the approach un-
derscores the significance of religion in diasporic constellations. This
emphasis is meant to (re)direct attention and awareness to the prototyp-
ical role of religious identity in situations of settlement after migration;
of the perpetuation of a specific identificational difference; or, amongst

other things, of the demarcation and strengthening of collective identity in a culturally foreign environment.[18]

The thereby sketched definition of "diasporic" aims to provide an empirically applicable approach, conceived in an analytical perspective. Adam McKeown justly notes: "When used in a more adjectival sense, the idea of diaspora can move away from identifying a bounded group, and instead focus on geographic dispersed connections, institutions, and discourses that cannot be readily accounted for from purely local or national frameworks" (1999: 311). Furthermore, it is not only the global and transnational linkages which are of interest. Rather, the discriminatory value of the diaspora term as an analytical category, applicable for transcultural research and comparison, has to become apparent. As an analytical category, the term is conceived as to constitute a complex whole with porous or fuzzy boundaries. For a better understanding of the complexity of the "whole", the analysis "intellectually decompos[es] it into the elements and relations that might be said to constitute it" (Saler 1993: 257). The heuristic value of the analysis is its intellectual organisation of the posited constituencies and relations by subsuming them under a category label. As Avtar Brah holds, the diaspora term's "purchase as a theoretical construct rests largely on its analytical reach; its explanatory power in dealing with the specific problematics associated with transnational movements of people, capital, commodities and cultural iconographies" (1996: 196).

"Diaspora" and transcultural comparison

Conceiving "diaspora" as an unbounded, analytical category, both singling out and encompassing a certain semantic field, is meant to enable and facilitate transcultural research, comparison and understand-

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[18] The definitorial approach has been worked out in detail in Baumann 2000. It primarily focuses on "diaspora" as a social form, leaving aside, for the time being, "diaspora" as a type of consciousness. As for the tripolar or triadic interrelatedness of a diasporic situation, see the instructive studies by Sheffer 1986, Hettlage 1991 and Safran 1991. For prototype theory, see the outline by Saler 1993: 197-226.

ing. Undeniably, modern and post-modern adoption of the diaspora term has extended, although not refined the term's semantics. Implicitly "diaspora" has been used for analytical work and transcultural comparison abundantly already, albeit mainly in an untheorized way. Some few authors, such as scholars in African studies, explicitely have made use of the transcultural, comparative capacity of the diaspora term. Certainly, interests in drawing specific comparisons have had their share too.

Conceptualized as an analytical category, a multitude of research fields opens up. Transcultural comparison of the complex areas of 'dynamics of religion' or religious change, migrated cultures and transplanted religions, or, persistence with change of individual and collective religious identity come to mind. Knott (1991) and Hinnells (1997b) systematized seven related areas for research along the issues of the place of language, transmission of religious knowledge, individual identity, group identity, leadership, universalization and the impact of Western religious ideas. Such fields include forms of religious change which broadly can be grouped as traditionalisation, adaptation and innovation.

Along with Gary Bouma (1996) we might add sociological aspects such as processes of religious institutionalisation and building of community. These typical efforts of the diaspora group strive to create a comforting and invigorating home away from home. Bouma's so-called "theory of religious settlement" (1996: 7) importantly draws attention to the ways a transplanted religious tradition finds a place within the society and amongst the spectrum of existent religions. How does the 'new', diasporic religion become a part of this society and its general culture? And, based on these processes, when in the long run will the religion and its adherents have become established and socio-culturally accepted to such an extent that is might be odd to still speak of a diasporic existence? Diachronic research on thus assigned diaspora communities of one or two hundred years existence have sug-

gested developmental phase models which bear fruitful points of cross-cultural comparison and insights.[19]

Therefore, in this way, the trans- or cross-cultural study of diasporic situations enables investigation from a similar angle and interrogating approach, different historic and socio-politically contextualized settings, be it Greek settlers in the Archaic Period, Jewish merchants and citizens in Hellenistic and later times, or South Asian migrants and citizens in North America and Britain. Insights gained and structuring patterns recognized in one specific case might heuristically be transferred to a different diasporic case, thus intellectually investigating and re-arranging the data afresh.

Furthermore, transcultural comparison importantly applies to delineating the triangular relationship of diaspora group, (former) ancestral homeland and country of present residence. This might apply to investigating factors and shifts of influence between the relational poles, or to changing identificational foci of the diaspora group, to name two areas only. Significantly for current multicultural political discourses, examples can be stated in which a diaspora group's retention of religious difference does not impede its socio-ecomomic integration and national identification. Touching such areas, Saint-Blancat (1995) on comparing Jewish diaspora histories and current Muslim presence in Europe, has sketched a heuristically valuable fourfold model of a diaspora group's relational attitude to its (former) country of origin and to its actual country of residence. A basic factor is the analysis of the group's favouring of distance on the one hand or proximity on the other hand towards the other relational poles within the triangular diasporic web. Further on differentiating this approach, the model was applied to the case study of Hindu Indians in Trinidad, observing, among other things, paradigmatic changes in the distance versus proximity attitudes

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[19] See, for example, Waldmann (1982) on German settlers in Chile from 1850 to the 1970s; and Baumann (2000) on indentured Indian workers in Trinidad from 1845 to the late 1990s. In this way, Altermatt's study (1986) on Catholics in Protestant Zurich 1850-1950 might profitably be restructured along such a developmental scheme, the same applies to further longitudinal studies of relevant groups and constellations.

due to the granting of rights and socio-economic participation in the country of residence (Baumann 2000).

In view of late 20th century technological achievements such as telecommunication and the internet, the master narrative of a diaspora's triangular relationship has become blurred and multiplied, however. Increasingly, relations of a diaspora group are not aligned with its country of actual residence and its (former) ancestral homeland only. More and more diaspora groups of the same national, cultural or religious bondage in other overseas sites take influence on the form and processes of a specific diaspora group. Rather than thinking of a relational triangle, many globally distributed diasporas such as the present Indian, Chinese, Irish, Tamil, Sikh, or Hindu diaspora constitute a diasporic network or web with joint-venture points and various gravitational centres. Dynamics of post-modern deterritorialization, its global cultural and economic flow, thus demand an on-going refinement of concepts and relational locating of "diaspora."[20]

Last but not least, transcultural comparison in an analytical perspective leads to differentiating diasporic dimensions and proposing typologies of varied ranges. This applies to the economic, socio-cultural, religious, and political spheres. Following Armstrong's early typology of 'mobilized' and 'proletarian diasporas' (1976), useful dimensional systematisations and typological classifications have been proposed by Ikonomu (1991), using Europe's Greek diaspora as an exemplary case, Robin Cohen (1997), illustrating 'victim', 'trade', 'labour' and further diasporas by a wide range of examples, and McKeown (1999), analysing in a structured way the modern Chinese diaspora. A few typologies with regard to the religious dimension in diasporic context have been suggested by Baumann earlier on, accompained by methodological proposals regarding diachronical and synchronical comparisons (1995: 28-29). In all of these and afore-mentioned cases, dias-

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[20] Arjun Appadurai instructively points to the changes brought about for diasporic "neighborhoods" in light of new forms of electronic mediation, see Appadurai 1996: 195-199. Certainly, in this respect issues and concepts of transnationalism are of prime importance, see footnote 3.

poric settings of different times and contexts have been systematized and analysed to enhance an understanding of the complex relations involved. As in the early days of the discipline of the history of religions, comparison, although this time much more reflexively controlled, is taken as a means and method to arrange and classify the wide range of data and to strive for theoretical conclusions and insights.

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TOWARDS A COGNITIVE SCIENCE OF RELIGION

E. THOMAS LAWSON

It is difficult to miss the fact that the last fifty years has given
birth to a revolution in the sciences. This revolution has not only
transformed the way scientists theorize about the human mind but the
means they have devised to test their theories. Cognitive science, which
has emerged in the context of this revolution, has coordinated, distilled
and extended the particular explanatory theories of human cognition
provided by cognitive psychology, cognitive anthropology, linguistics,
artificial intelligence (AI), philosophy, neuroscience and computer
science. It has even begun to operate within the context of comparative
religion. The purpose of this contribution is to discuss the relevance
of cognitive science for the study of the religious ideas and practices
of humankind by pursuing three questions: 1) Is a cognitive science of
religion possible? 2) Is a cognitive science of religion necessary? 3) Is
a cognitive science of religion emerging?

Is A Cognitive Science of Religion Possible?

Theorizing about religion as a *cultural* system is standard fare in
the social sciences and has also had a great impact on studies in the
humanities. Theorizing about religion as a set of cultural phenomena
from a *cognitive* perspective is a more recent development. In fact,
in many respects a cognitive approach to cultural phenomena such as
religion is quite novel, and because of such novelty, capable of arous-
ing intense suspicion and even antagonism. One of the main reasons
for such a response to this new science has been the inevitable sus-
picion aroused whenever scholars make appeals to psychological ex-
planations of socio-cultural phenomena. The standard assumption in
the social sciences and the humanities has been that only social and
cultural methods can explain social and cultural facts. Of course the
possibility of a cognitive science of religion depends upon showing

that cognitive explanations of socio-cultural facts not only are possible but have already happened. If cognitive science has already been successful in developing interesting, powerful and empirically tractable theories of one cultural form then that success certainly would have relevance for a science of other cultural phenomena such as religion. And it is no longer much of a secret that a cognitive science of language, an eminently cultural phenomenon, is in full bloom and has been since the fifth decade of the twentieth century. Ever since the publication of Noam Chomsky's *Syntactic Structures* (1957) the cognitive study of language has made astonishing progress. Explanatory theories abound at the phonological, syntactic and semantic levels of analysis. (For a recent popular account of the cognitive revolution in the study of language see Steven Pinker's *The Language Instinct* [1994].)

In earlier theorizing about human languages one feature of languages which had seemed to pose problems for cross-cultural generalizations had been their seemingly endless variability. Such variability seemed an obstacle to systematic study whether one focussed upon the differences in sounds, the differences in word order, or the differences in meaning. The variety of languages and language forms in the world is immense not even taking local dialects into consideration. It would seem that no one scholar could ever hope to develop a significant command of all of these languages. So how could one produce a theory unless one had command of all of the facts? Scholars of religion who are equally cognizant of the great variety of religions and religious forms could take comfort in the massiveness of religious variety and settle for something less or something other than generalizations about religious phenomena. So if, despite such variation, a cognitive science of language has in fact emerged this gives scholars of religion hope that a similar cognitive science of religion could be developed.

Another feature of language worthy of note to scholars of religion is that, such diversity notwithstanding, the cognitive study of language has led to the development of theories about the underlying structure of language. Such study has revealed that deep down languages are not that different from each other. In fact not only have cognitive scientists developed powerful competence theories of the phonology, syntax and

semantics of human languages but they also have been successful in the discipline of pragmatics (see Sperber and Wilson, *Relevance*, 1986) where matters of performance take precedence over theories of linguistic competence. As the result of such studies in pragmatics we now know much more about the structure of communication than we did before.

What the cognitive science of language has shown is that beneath the variability of language there is a commonality, or to be more precise, a set of principles which accounts for the complex character of linguistic phenomena. It is not variable all the way down. In fact on the syntactic level of analysis linguists have been able to demonstrate that there are certain universal constraints (known as Universal Grammar) on the formation of particular grammars. Beneath the surface complexity of human languages lies a set of principles which organize the sequences of words that make up sentences in quite specific ways. The result has been the development of interesting theories about the trajectory from sound to meaning.

The fact of the success of linguistics, therefore, is an existence proof of the possibility of a science of at least one form of culture, namely language. A cognitive science of religion would be possible if it could be shown that despite the obvious variability of religion across cultures and throughout history there lay a similar specifiable commonality. In the third section of this paper we shall address the evidence for such commonalities in the emerging cognitive science of religion.

Is a Cognitive Science of Religion Necessary?

Let us concede for the moment that a cognitive science of religion is possible. Such a concession does not, however, make it *necessary* for scholars of religion to actualize the possibility of a cognitive science of religion. Not every road that beckons need be trod. In a world of many options perhaps there are better journeys to take. Why not, instead, continue to do what historians and anthropologists of religion have done so well? Our shelves are filled with careful historical studies of the development of particular religious traditions, fine grained ethnographic studies of various societies, sophisticated philo-

logical studies essential for grasping the connotations and denotations of esoteric texts, powerful contextual studies of particular features of religious traditions, trenchant studies of the relationships between religious systems and political or economic systems. and even postmodernist critiques of the very possibility of objective scholarship of any kind in the human sciences. All these endeavors have contributed to a greater or lesser degree to our understanding of religious ideas, the practices they inform, the institutions they engender and the controversies they generate. So why not stay the course and ignore the revolution?

Actually, no particular line of scientific inquiry *is* ever necessary. Refusing to engage in any kind of inquiry is always an option. And even science itself, as a highly specialized enterprise does not require our commitment. Although human beings are gifted with inquisitive minds it is quite possible to keep such inquisitiveness at bay and within bounds. Many individuals and groups of people have been and continue to be quite successful at restraining their inquisitiveness. And at times in human history inquiry into the nature of the physical world has been suppressed. At different times and places various social institutions have demonstrated at least an ambivalent attitude toward science, and on occasion, an active hostility towards it. Furthermore it is only when such inquisitiveness is institutionalized and its development encouraged and supported with adequate resources that the sciences begin to bloom. Societies with only a rudimentary science have existed in the past and could exist again. There are no guarantees (see Robert N. McCauley, "Comparing the Cognitive Foundations of Religion and Science," 1998) that science will remain as a viable way of acquiring knowledge about ourselves and the world we occupy. Human beings are quite capable of settling for rumor, gossip, innuendo, unsubstantiated reports, and propaganda. Such predilections might even confer an evolutionary advantage!

But as part of the academy and wishing to see the discipline to which we have committed our lives make our knowledge of the world grow, there are good reasons for us to follow new paths of inquiry when they show promise of fulfilling our objectives. A sense of adventure

might lead us into trouble, but sometimes the trouble is worth it if new discoveries beckon. So despite such cautionary statements I wish to claim that a cognitive science of religion is necessary (in the sense of worthy of being done) because it will help lead us into deeper insights about symbolic-cultural systems such as religion. A cognitive science of religion certainly shows every promise of deepening our understanding of the cognitive constraints on cultural form. Those who are dedicated to cultural relativism and its cousin cultural determinism often give the impression that there are no limits either on the contents of our minds or the cultural products that issue forth from them. We have come to see through the insights of cognitive science that this is not the case. There *are* limits to cultural (and, *a fortiori*, religious) variability.

Of particular importance to the discipline of the history of religions at this time is the development of explanatory theories of religion by scholars who are not only tuned to the sciences but also have a deep knowledge of religious traditions. In our study of these religious traditions our discipline has typically been long on interpretation and short on explanation. In other words we have been focussed more on problems of meaning and significance than problems of structure and cause. Making explanatory issues more central to our discipline (without denying the values of interpretation) promises to redress the imbalance between interpretive and explanatory concerns by deepening our understanding of the structure, acquisition, transmission and communication of religious ideas and the practices they inform. So a cognitive science of religion is necessary *if* we wish our knowledge of the systematicity of cultural forms to grow and especially if we desire more penetrating explanations of the structure and causes of religious ideas and practices.

Is a Cognitive Science of Religion Emerging?

As I have already argued, the best way to deal with the question of whether something is possible is to show that it has already been done. (In fact, the international journal *Trends in Cognitive Sciences* recently published an article by Justin Barrett "Exploring the Natural Founda-

tions of Religion" on the new cognitive science of religion [2000]). Some scholars who were interested in cultural phenomena such as religion and who had been paying close attention to the birth of the new science of the mind decided that it was worth employing the strategies of the cognitive sciences to religious materials. They decided to rethink *religionswissenschaft* by suggesting cognitive explanations of phenomena that had largely resided within the province of hermeneutics. So, for example, Dan Sperber reexamined issues concerning symbolism and meaning in *Rethinking Symbolism* (1975). In that by now classic work Sperber not only showed the weakness of semiotic approaches to the study of cultural forms, but he also showed that specific cultural activities such as the widespread use of symbolism are evidence of specific mental abilities each of which need to be distinguished from each other and each of which have a causal role in cultural productions. In that book he was able to at least highlight the differences between dictionary, encyclopedic and symbolic knowledge and to demonstrate important properties of the latter. Sperber turned our attention to the variety of cognitive mechanisms we need to identify and describe if we are to have any hope of developing new and interesting theories about the cultural life of human beings.

One of the most interesting things about any scientific theory is that you never know whether what you are describing is going to be relevant to anything or not. A case in point are the many alternative geometries that mathematicians have constructed over the centuries which seemed to have no relevance to the world as we know it. And then in the twentieth century it became apparent that such geometries were very useful indeed to modern physics. By adopting a cognitive perspective Dan Sperber was able to make us rethink not only symbolism but the mind that produces it. (See Lawson "Religious Ideas and Practices," 1999.) Rethinking symbolism led to the challenge to rethink religion, and more specifically to rethink how we go about studying religion from a cognitive scientific perspective. Suddenly a science that seemed only of marginal significance to cultural phenomena was seen to be capable of playing a major role in explaining religion.

Cognitive science is the study of the set of processes by means of which human beings come to know the world (Lawson, "Cognition", *Guide to the Study of Religion*, 2000). To the extent that religious knowledge counts as knowledge (and why should it not?) then whatever we have discovered about such processes certainly should be relevant to our study of religion. No one can deny that the contents of human minds are influenced by cultural processes. The issue is to describe and explain what is going on when our minds in their interaction with cultural phenomena create, employ and transmit concepts of any kind including religious ones.

The emerging cognitive science of religion has focussed on three problems: 1) How do human minds *represent* religious ideas? 2) How do human minds *acquire* religious ideas? 3) What forms of *action* do such ideas precipitate?

Religious Representations

Philosophers of religion, theologians, historians of religions and even anthropologists of religion have sometimes argued that religious concepts are sufficiently different not only from each other but also from all other ideas to justify special analyses. Some such analyses have been conceived of in such radical terms that they have insisted that special experiences, special commitments, special methods and even special mental spaces are required in order for religion to be understood. An alternative approach would be to show that *our ordinary, natural cognitive resources are sufficient to account for religious ideas*. In *Rethinking Religion: Connecting Cognition and Culture* (1990) Lawson and McCauley were able to show that such is the case for at least those religious representations about religious ritual action. That work argued that our cognitive resources for the representation of action were sufficient to account for the representation of religious ritual action.

Since that work a great many further accomplishments in the cognitive study of religion have appeared. For example, Barrett and Keil (1996) showed experimentally that when people engaged in theological reflection (no matter which society they lived in) they tended to

produce "theologically correct" formulations of the properties of their deities. However, when presented with stories of the gods and when being called upon to remember what they had been presented with, people tended to systematically *mis*-remember these properties of the gods. So, for example, while their theological thoughts of the gods represented them as being everywhere, nevertheless their recall of items in the story showed that they represented the gods as being in a specific location at a specific time. Evidently, human beings have deep intuitions about what agents are like. Agents are spatially and temporally bound. Even though peoples' theological reflections suggested rather unusual properties of a special class of agents, superhuman agents, nevertheless their ordinary intuitions overrode the contents of such abstract, "off-line" reflections. One should not be surprised, therefore, that the gods are so frequently represented in anthropomorphic ways in religious narratives.

Pascal Boyer (1994) has further developed this notion of the use of our ordinary cognitive resources for religious representations by his groundbreaking work on intuitive ontologies. To have an intuitive ontology is simply to possess a set of expectations of what the world is like. In the terms of our intuitive ontologies the world is a place where solid objects do not pass through each other, where living things require food to survive and grow, where animate things have goals, where agents have thoughts, and where artificial things do not come naturally — they have to be made. What Boyer has shown is that in order to have *religious* representations these ordinary expectations about what the world is like only have to be *violated in minimal ways*, for example either by violating only one of the assumptions of the ontological category involved or by transferring one of these assumptions from one category to another. Take, for example, the ontological category "person". Our ordinary expectations about persons are that they are intentional, biological and physical agents. Violating only the physical assumptions about agents delivers the concept of a superhuman agent conceived of as intentional, and living being but without a body.

Acquisition and Transmission

It is one thing to develop theories of how religious ideas are represented. It is another thing to account for how they are acquired. On the face of it it would appear that, in the competition for ideas that make a difference to our understanding of the world, ideas about superhuman agents without bodies would hardly make the grade. Why have such preposterous (or, more gently, "counter-intuitive') ideas not been eliminated a long time ago? Here, actually, is an area in which the cognitive science of religion has already made a contribution to cognitive science in general. What Boyer and others have been able to show is that in the processes of cultural transmission counter-intuitive ideas have a *mnemonic advantage*. In simple terms, ideas in which certain properties of our intuitive ontologies are violated *are more memorable than ideas which contain no such violations*. What Boyer has shown via the notion of a cognitive optimum is that in order for a religious idea to survive it requires two things. An idea needs to have the properties that any idea has, and it also needs something to make it stand out from competing ideas.

Now what we have learned from cognitive science is that the human mind acquires concepts in surprisingly complex ways. Developmental psychologists, for example, have shown that children actively construct their theories of what the world is like from the moment of birth. Rather than being blank slates which have information scribbled on them by the invisible hand of culture, children's minds show evidence of evolutionary design by their complex functional organization. Human minds have many competencies equipped to handle many domains of information. While, strictly speaking, there is no particular or special domain of religious information, human minds are so designed that they are responsive to certain kinds of information that capture human attention because of their memorability.

Religious Ritual Action

Lawson and McCauley (1990) have shown that the representation of religious ritual action depends upon quite ordinary action representations. The main thing that distinguishes religious ritual action repre-

sentations from ordinary action representations is the assumption that the agents involved in the action possess special qualities. So the basic action structure of a religious ritual is "someone does something to someone or something with a particular consequence and by means of a particular instrument." In order for such an ordinary action description to count as a ritual action description is to show that the agency involved possesses *special qualities*. Boyer's work about the minimal violations of intuitive ontological categories provides the means for explicating what makes such agents capable of being conceived of a superhuman agents. The special qualities of the agents presupposed in religious ritual action are that they violate some of the assumptions ordinarily associated with ordinary agent. But equally important, most of the properties of such agents, and the inferences that can be drawn from them are the properties and inferences that we would normally associate with any agent.

What we should also not miss about religious ritual representations is that they make it possible for certain things to get done that would not otherwise get done! The issues are not just ontological but also causal. Religious representations make it possible for people to devise special ways of bringing about new ways of associating with each other in social ways, hence the widespread practice of rites of passage. The big story is that cognitive scientists are beginning to unravel the mysteries involved in the cognitive processes which make such causal representations possible.

A cognitive science of religion is obviously still in the process of development. It has demonstrated its ability to encourage interdisciplinary work, for example, among anthropologists, psychologists, philosophers, computer scientists and historians of religion. A new generation of scholars working in different disciplinary contexts are transgressing the boundaries of these disciplines and communicating with each other across those boundaries. Conferences involving cognition, culture and religion are beginning to occur quite regularly and the proceedings of such conferences are rapdily moving towards publication (see, J. Andresen, *Religion in Mind*, [in press]) and a new journal, *The Journal of Cognition and Culture* (published by Brill Academic

Publishers) will begin publication in 2001. The cognitive science of religion that is emerging promises to disclose aspects of human religions that, so far, have escaped explanation. Such explanations should find a warm welcome in the next generation of scholars of religion.

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TO LOCK UP ELEUSIS: A QUESTION OF LIMINAL SPACE[1]

Dag Øistein Endsjø

Summary

In this article, I argue that the geographical periphery, the *eschatia*, represented an area within the ancient Greek worldview that reflected a territorial parallel to the intermediate state of the Greek rites of passage. There were also a number of mythological ties between the *eschatia* and this ritual mid state, the most basic aspect of both of them consisting of a simultaneous being and non-being that entailed a sense of profound confusion of all proper categories. Placed not only betwixt and between the land of the dead and *polis* as the land of the living, but also between an Olympian and a chthonic divine sphere, the uncultivated geographical periphery represented an ambiguous and primordial landscape, where men had still not been distinguished from the realm of the gods, the animals, and the dead. As the geographical periphery thus was considered to reflect a primordial quality, the intermediate phase of various rites of passage was seen as the ritual imitation of this area. Having journeyed to the ends of the earth and the land of the dead, Heracles could therefore suggest closing down the Eleusian mysteries. Operating with a theoretical concept of liminal space, I will in this way try to show how the idea of ritual liminality, as initiated by Arnold van Gennep and Victor Turner, may be transferred to a spatial context.

Having travelled to the land of the dead, Heracles, the archetypal hero, makes a novel suggestion: "Lock up Eleusis and the sacred fire," he says.[2] Thus he proposes to put an end to what Cicero called the best of all "excellent and indeed divine institutions that Athens has brought forth and contributed to human life."[3] It is not, however, that Heracles does not acknowledge the intrinsic value of the mysteries, but through his ultimate experience it seems that the hero has found the very pattern upon which the Eleusian mysteries are based: "I have experienced far truer mysteries [. . .] I have seen Korē."[4]

That death is a central element in Heracles's ultimate experience is obvious. Just as important, however, is how the hero reaches this point geographically. Heracles's story is not one of dying and subsequent resurrection; it is one of going to Hades while still alive. As this journey to the land of the dead would entail extensive travelling through vast and — from a Greek point of view — uncivilised landscapes, I wish to argue that it is not only the contemplating of Korē that reflects the experience of the Eleusian mysteries. The encounter with the queen of Hades represents only the climax of the long ordeal of this ultimate, spatial passage.[5] Also the Argonauts prepared for

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[2] Vogliano 1937, 176-77: λόγοι ‘Ηρ]ακλέους μὴ ἐωμέ[νου τελ]εῖσθαι τὰ ᾿Ελευσίνια. [πάλαι μ]εμ<ύ>ημαι. ἀπόκλει[σον τὴν ᾿Ε]λευσεῖνα καὶ τὸ πῦρ [τὸ ἱερόν,] δᾳδοῦχε, καὶ φθό[νει νυκ]τὸς ἱερᾶς· μυστήρια [πολλῷ ἀ]ληθέστερα μεμύημαι (. . .) [. . .] τὴν Κόρην εἶδον. "Heracles said: To go through that of Eleusis do not satiate me. I have [already] been initiated. Lock up Eleusis and the sacred [fire], torch-bearer (an officer at the Eleusinian mysteries), envy the sacred night. I have been intitiated into [far] truer mysteries [. . .] I have seen Korē." I owe it to Walter Burkert for being aware of this text.

[3] Cicero *De Legibus* 2.36.

[4] Vogliano 1937, 177.

[5] Indeed, most versions will recount how Heracles descended into Hades through some crevice in the earth's surface usually in Greece proper. When Odysseus met Heracles at the border of Hades, the implication is nevertheless that Heracles, when alive, had travelled the same route as Odysseus, that is, sailing across Oceanus to the uttermost end of the world and there entering Hades (*Odyssey* 11.620-26; cf. *ibid.* 10.508-12). Also the late fifth century B.C. tragedian Euripides writes of Heracles's sailing to Hades ([. . .] τὸν πολυδάκρυον ἔπλευσ' ἐς ῞Αιδαν [. . .], *Hercules Furens*

their perilous journey to the ends of the earth through being initiated. Going through the mysteries of the Cabeiri on the island of Samothrace ensured that the heroes with "greater safety could sail over the chilling sea."[6]

The novel suggestion of Heracles as recorded on a second century A.D. papyrus found in Egyptian Tebtunis,[7] is also reflected in Euripides's fifth century B.C. tragedy *Heracles*. Here, too, the hero succeeds in his journey to the land of the dead; now, however, only because he has *previously* gone through the rites of Eleusis.[8] Thus, also Euripides indicates that there was a close relation between the experience of the mysteries and that of travelling in the uncivilised landscapes.

In this way a certain cultural pattern is indicated, a pattern so central and enduring within the ancient Greek world view that it could be reflected in the classical plays of Euripides just as much as in late Hellenistic papyri. Going through the mysteries would in some way prepare the traveller for the extreme journey not only to the land of the dead, but also to the uncultivated landscapes of the periphery in general. It seems that what we are presented with is a landscape somehow linked with the Greek rites of passage, a certain geography of initiation. It is at least obvious that the more distant areas of the Greek worldview played a very distinct part in this ritual universe.

426-27), though he also at the same time operates with the more traditional descent. A passage by the first or second century A.D. mythographer Pseudo-Apollodorus seems to reflect the story of Heracles in the *Odyssey*, recounting how the hero crossed Oceanus and then encountered the cattle of Hades and their herdsman Menœtes (Pseudo-Apollodorus *Bibliotheca* 2.5.10). Even though this story actually refers to Heracles's getting the herd of the giant *Geryon*, Hades's cattle and the herdsman are the same as what the ultimate hero meets when he is about to enter the dank abode to fetch Cerberus (Pseudo-Apollodorus *Bibliotheca* 2.5.12). This suggests again that crossing the Oceanus to the literal end of the world could have been Heracles's original way of reaching Hades.

[6] Æschylus according to Athenæus 428f; cf. also Apollonius of Rhodes *Argonautica* 1.915-18, and Bremmer 1998, 99-100.

[7] Cf. Vogliano 1937, 175-76.

[8] Euripides *Hercules Furens* 610-13.

The main question thus becomes how and to what degree the Greek understanding of space may be understood as being analogous to the highly ritually manipulated moments of time in the rites of passage. Is there such a thing as an ancient Greek space of passage? Can one operate with a notion of *liminal space* within the old Greek worldview?

The *rites of passage* as first defined by Arnold van Gennep in his influential book of the same name (van Gennep [1909]), include the sequence of three phases: first the subject has to go through a rite of segregation from his or her previous role in society. Then he or she goes through an intermediate phase, before finally being reaggregated into his or her new role.

Victor Turner is the scholar who with the greatest success has elaborated van Gennep's theories, most importantly by coining the term *liminality*. This term referred to van Gennep's "liminal state" or "interstructural situation" that Turner found typical for that intermediate phase between the ritual separation and aggregation from and to proper social roles: this is "a realm [. . .] *betwixt and between* [. . .] any type of stable or recurrent condition that is culturally recognised" (Turner 1967, 93; 94). Having to be bordered by one opposite at either side between which it may represent a state of transition, the interstructural or liminal state is consequently defined by what it *is not*.

Turner also pointed to a general sense of confusion and ambiguity that he found typical of this initiatory mid state. Normally incompatible elements of the conditions, in between which the interstructural state is found, will be paradoxically juxtaposed and recombined. It "may perhaps be regarded as the Nay to all positive structural assertions, but as in some sense the source of them all, and, more than that, as a realm of pure possibility whence novel configurations of ideas and relations may arise" (Turner 1967, 97). Every element of existence may be found severed from its usual context, juxtaposed by its usually mutually exclusive opposite, and assembled into new, totally nonsensical combinations. Thus, all the usual social states of gender, age, hierarchy, as well as even more basic opposites such as human versus divine, human versus animal, and dead versus alive, may be negated and reverted in the liminal state. Regardless of whether one

considers van Gennep's rites of passage a universal phenomenon or not, his liminal state, as has been emphasised in a large number of studies, offers a pattern that fits well with the structure of the various ancient Greek mysteries and other transitional rites leading the subject from one culturally recognised state to another.[9] Van Gennep himself, in fact, based his theories to a large degree on the structures of the ancient mysteries and other Greek transitional rites.[10] Examples such as the reversal of gender roles, outright cross-dressing, dressing up as animals, the symbolical intermingling with gods, apparent sacrilege and even pseudo-cannibalism all fit within this ambiguous pattern.

I am, however, using the term *liminality* with caution. This is partly because the term so successfully has acquired something like a status of a universal phenomenon seemingly independent from the various cultural contexts. Moreover, there is an increasing tendency, initiated by the late Turner himself, of applying the term to the most various phenomena, apparently often quite unrelated to actual transitional rites. In my use of the term liminality I will therefore ask the reader to be aware that I always keep to its initial meaning, as an analytical tool intimately connected to the intermediate phase of the ritual transition. It is consequently also important to keep in mind that liminality, of course, was not a term used by the ancient Greeks.

Even though the theories of van Gennep and Turner have proven helpful for the understanding of ancient transitional rituals, they can only bring us part of the way towards a theory of how the Greek could operate with such an intimate connection between their rites of passage and the geographical periphery. When developing his definition of the temporal phases of the rites of passage, Arnold van Gennep saw the territorial border zones between the more clearly defined areas as not only structurally identical with the intermediate period of transitional rituals, but considered the physical passage as the very *origin* of the rites of spiritual passage (van Gennep [1909], 22). If we look to the

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[9] See e.g. Burkert [1987], Marinatos 1995, Nelis 1991, Redfield 1990, Scully 1990, Versnel 1990, and Vidal-Naquet [1981].

[10] Cf. van Gennep [1909], 18; 37; 89-91.

structural implication from this idea of a transitional area, we realise that this is an area that is defined by what it is not. It is something like a spatial remain, a non-structuralised border area that appears only as other, culturally recognised areas are defined away from it.

In this way, van Gennep opened for the idea that there are certain border areas that represent a mental and social transition for the person who traverses them. Just as the theoretical notion of *initiatory* or *liminal time* was created through different rites of passage, it may seem that van Gennep's theories also include a notion of *liminal space*. Was, however, van Gennep right in thinking that space, just as well as the manipulated time of the rites of passage, could be the medium for the interstructural state of liminality? And if he was correct, how is the term *liminal space* able to help us understand the intimate relation between the geographical periphery and the Greek initiatory rites? As van Gennep refrained from any further theoretical elaboration of these spatial theories, he does not provide us with any more means for seeing how the ancient Greeks constructed their world in such a way that there existed an interrelation between the intermediate state of their rites of passage and the most distant parts of their world.

Victor Turner was in no way unaware of that space could represent an important part within a given cultural context. His understanding of the possible connection between space and liminality was, however, in no way straightforward. In his studies on pilgrimage he could use a spatial understanding of van Gennep's threshold analogy, referring to how a "pilgrimage center, from the standpoint of the believing actor, also represents a threshold, a place and moment 'in and out of time'" (Turner 1974, 197). For Turner, certain places, like Rome and Mecca, remain "fundamentally liminal to the entire world of political organization" (Turner & Turner 1978, 168). This pattern of single places of liminality may be summed in how he considered a "spatial location of liminality" as an area "clearly set apart" (Turner & Turner 1978, 4). This understanding of spatial liminality, however, is contradictory not only to van Gennep's idea of liminal space as representing an essentially unstructured area, but also to Turner's own notion of liminality generally being "a realm [...] *betwixt and*

between [. . .] any type of stable or recurrent condition that is culturally recognised" (Turner 1967, 93; 94). By describing it as an area "clearly set apart," Turner made his understanding of spatial liminality into an example of a "stable or recurrent condition that is culturally recognised" — a notion in absolute contradiction to his own idea of ritual liminality.

While van Gennep saw the undefined, transitional areas as loaded with meaning projected onto it by the culture that contemplated it, Turner considered the culturally undefined space as a neutral ground that could only acquire a quality of liminality through some liminal ritual taking place there. This notion that space only acquires meaning through ritual performance, is evident both in his analyses of Ndembu ritual and in his study of different pilgrimages. Writing on pilgrimage and initiation, he summed up: "The former liminalizes time; the latter, space" (Turner 1992, 39).

As culturally recognised places are carved out of an originally undefined territory, huge areas will also remain outside of these culturally recognised frames. Turner, however, did not recognise how these spatial "remains" also represent cultural constructions. He thus failed to appreciate how spatial entities were perceived to possess an *autonomous* liminal status within a given worldview.

This autonomy of the geographical, liminal space is the notion that must be considered to lie behind Heracles's claim that he no longer had any need for the Eleusian mysteries after his extensive travelling in the distant geography. In this case, the periphery seems to possess something of the same phenomenological essence as the liminal phase of the transitional rites, a certain liminal essence that belongs to these landscapes, quite independent of transitional rites.

In spite of his own not very helpful geographical elaborations, Turner's original definition of liminality does nevertheless not have to be restricted to temporal categories. His understanding of liminality as "a realm [. . .] *betwixt and between* [. . .] any type of stable or recurrent condition that is culturally recognised," may easily be applied to aspects of space, in accordance with van Gennep's original insight.

Liminal Space as the Geography of Life and Death

Parallel to how the uttermost periphery was considered rather like a spatial image of the rites of passage, the uncultivated areas right outside of the city walls were used as the venue for a number of Greek initiatory rites where young boys would attain maturity and the right to citizenship. The Athenian *ephebes*, for example, would be sent out to the wild mountainsides and there have their civic status forever altered, while Cretan youths at the brink of manhood would be abducted into the wilderness by older lovers.[11] Bringing somebody to these areas right outside the *polis* implied that he or she was removed from civil society in more ways than just spatially. The myths of many of the great heroes reflect a similar mechanism. While Achilles, Actæon, Aristæus, Asclepius, Jason, and later also his son, Medus, all reached their manhood in the wild landscapes of the centaur Chiron, the adolescent Odysseus was sent to the mountain slopes of Parnassus where he experienced an initiatory ordeal through the instructions of his maternal grandfather, Autolycus.[12]

As indicated by these various examples of apparently liminal incidents, the most distant geography and the wasteland just outside of the cultivated areas did not represent regions that were essentially different from each other. In the *Bacchæ* Euripides clearly demonstrated that this was the case, as he had the mountainsides just outside of Thebes filled with native women celebrating the mythical prototype of the Dionysian mysteries together with the god himself and his entourage of foreign women. All the areas not under the cultivation of the Greek *polis* may, in fact, be summed up by the term *ta eschatia*, the furthest part. This

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[11] Strabo 10.4.21.

[12] Achilles in *Iliad* 11.831-32; Actæon in Pseudo-Apollodorus *Bibliotheca* 3.4.4; Aristæus in Apollonius of Rhodes *Argonautica* 2.509-10; Asclepius in *Iliad* 4.218-19 and in Pindar *Pyth.* 3.5-7; Jason in Pindar *Pyth.* 4.102; Jason's son Medus in Hesiod *Theogonia* 1001-2; and Odysseus in *Odyssey* 19.392-96. Without looking at the spatial context, Jan N. Bremmer concludes that the ancient hero traditions "designate their protagonists as young men in the transition from boyhood to adulthood" (Bremmer 1977, 35).

term not only applied to the most distant periphery, but was also generally used for the uncultivated areas bordering immediately on the civilised geography (Hartog [1980], 13). Thus, if we shall operate with a notion of *liminal space* within the Greek worldview, the *eschatia* covers the whole of the area. The only trait common to all of these areas was that they all lay *outside of the Greek city walls*, which were symbolically representing the limits of civilised society. The *eschatia*, the landscapes that the ancient Greeks repeatedly related to the experience of the rites of passage, stretched accordingly from the hinterland just outside the *polis* to the uttermost periphery at the end of the world.

Having proposed the hypothesis that the Greek *eschatia* represented a *liminal space* by pointing to a number of examples where this area apparently reflected the intermediate state of various Greek rites of passage, our next task will be to see how the ancient Greeks constructed their worldview in such a way that they logically could perceive this interrelation. As Victor Turner emphasised, it is the placement betwixt and between two culturally recognised stable conditions that creates the intermediate state of the rites of passage. If the *eschatia* was a *geographical* area that was situated between different sets of stable culturally recognised *geographical* conditions, we shall therefore have a structural parallel to the mid phase of the ancient Greek rites of passage.

Looking for stable geographical conditions, we will, of course, find the Greek *polis* as a natural point of departure. Through its mere presence, the *polis* not only defined the *eschatia* as its geographical periphery, but was also the area that represented the only place of true humanity. Without *polis*, man was "either a beast or a god," as Aristotle pointed out.[13] The city defined a space that in itself was humanising. The space of the *polis* constituted a stable and culturally recognised geographical condition representing a certain cultural pattern that pertained to all aspects of the proper human existence.

It is important, however, also to include the cultivated land, the *chora*, within the notion of the human *polis*. With the exception of

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[13] Aristotle *Politica* 1253a.

Sparta,[14] there was no city state, as far as I know, whose *chora* in any way represented an entity radically different from the more urbanised space of the *polis*: the city area and the cultivated land together constituted the land of human civilisation.

The *polis* was nevertheless not an eternal entity. For its continued existence, the city depended upon its denizens living according to a number of cultural rules that defined them as humans. A serious negligence or reversal of any of these crucial practices would be tantamount to dehumanising the space of the *polis*. Among these essential activities were the practice of sacrifice and agriculture, the eating of bread,[15] the necessity of working for survival, and, most importantly, a number of clear lines set up for keeping death on the outside. Defining the space of human life, the *polis* would not tolerate death in its midst and demanded that ritual precautions should be made to keep the city safe from pollution caused by any occurrence of death. Within a prescribed time, anyone who died within the parameters of the city walls was literally carried out of the space of the *polis* through the ritual of the *ekphora*.[16]

The fact that *polis* represented the only space where proper human life might be fulfilled, suggests that the *polis* may be considered to reflect a perceived *space of life*. The great precautions for keeping death outside the city walls further indicate that the realm diametrically *opposite* to the existence of *polis* was that of human death. However, if the definition of the *polis* as the *space of life* may appear somewhat original, the quest for a *space of death* will not lead us into uncharted

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[14] The Spartan *krypteiai*, young men in their transitional period, would roam their own countryside as well as the *eschatia*, harassing and even killing unfortunate Helots, public slaves not belonging to the city space proper (cf. Osborne 1987, 150). It is because the very existence of these Spartan citizens-to-be in all manners was removed from the agricultural sphere of their society, that the cultivated land, the *chora*, for the Spartans also could represent an area of transition along with the uncultivated mountainsides and other wastelands.

[15] Fritz Graf, for example, emphasises how certain victuals indicate a distance from the normal situation. Cf. Graf 1980, 209-21.

[16] Solon according to Demosthenes 43.62, Plato *Leges* 960a, Antiphon 6.34.

territories: *Hades*, or the land of the dead, was a well known entity within the Greek worldview.

Mirroring how *polis* represented a territory where everything reflected the notions of human life, Hades represented a space where everything was death. The most important aspect of Hades in this context, however, will be its location. Just as death was man's ultimate temporal limit, the space in which humans might venture was also ultimately bounded by death. There was subsequently (as indicated at the start of this article) an explicit notion that death *could* be reached geographically. Odysseus's journey to the land of the dead was definitely a geographical adventure, as the hero went by the river Oceanus, beyond the island of Circe at the end of the world, to the borders of the land of the dead.[17] Accordingly, the peoples of the absolute geographical periphery, such as Homer's Cimmerians, were said to live closer to the dead.[18]

The utmost boundaries of the world represented a spatial reflection of how man ceased to exist beyond his own human limits. The term used was *to peras* or *to peirar* — that is an end, limit, boundary — regardless whether the matter in question was that of the end of the world, the temporal borders of the human life,[19] or even the limit of man's physical performance. As man's limitations thus were reflected in both a temporal, a physical, as well as in a geographical manner, common to all three dimensions was that there was a limit of human potential beyond which one touched upon the realm where man was not.[20] These borders were equal to the Homeric and Hesiodic *peirata*

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[17] *Odyssey* 10.508-12.

[18] *Ibid.* 11.12-15.

[19] As in Sophocles *Œdipus Tyrannus* 1530.

[20] Building on this understanding of these as related phenomena, the fifth century B.C. poet Pindar used the Pillars of Heracles as a metaphor to hail the highest achievements of the athletes in the Panhellenic games (*Nem.* 3.20-23; cf. *Isth.* 4.11-12). "Pindar measures the prowess of his athlete-patrons in geographic terms, seeing their victories as journeys into distant space" (Romm 1992, 18). One could only reach as far as the Pillars, "further is impassable (ἄβατος) for both wise and unwise" (*Ol.*

gaiēs[21] — the very end of the world beyond which the world no longer existed.

The different spaces of the *eschatia*, the *polis*, and Hades all represented different patterns that made certain ways of existence either possible or impossible. In the way it was culturally constructed, space seems in this way to have represented a rather uncompromising factor within the worldview of ancient Greece.[22] A certain spatial entity would embrace all aspects of the reality it was considered to reflect. Thus, there would always appear an intimate connection between any given area and that which belonged within it.

When the existential dichotomy of human *life* and *death* in this way was transferred onto the externalised reality of space, we find that this duality was expanded into the more comprehensive dichotomy of *being* and *non-being*. The notion of the nothingness of Hades was subsequently also repeatedly emphasised: the dead encountered by Odysseus were completely powerless, immaterial shadows without a speck of wisdom,[23] while the cap of Hades gave its wearer the guise of invisibility.[24] This consistent immateriality of Hades indicates an actual notion of inspatiality in the land of the dead. This quality of non-being was also reflected in an actual timelessness in Hades, as indicated by the way "the *psychē* of the dead" was thought to be "frozen in time at the moment of death" (Keuls 1974, 14) — or more precisely: the immaterial form of the dead remained forever in the state that it was at the moment of the final transposal to Hades. Men who had been slain in battle continued to wear their bloodstained armour,[25]

3.44-45). In his Pythian odes (10.27-30) Pindar wrote of the land of the Hyperboreans as a similar metaphor for the utmost limit (περαίνει πρὸς ἔσχατον) of the athlete.

[21] *Iliad* 8.478-79, 14.200, 14.301; *Odyssey* 4.563, 9.284; *Homeric Hymn to Aphrodite* 227; Hesiod *Theogonia* 334-35, 518, 622, 731; *peiratha pontoio* in *Iliad* 8.478-79; *peirath' ōkeanos* in *Odyssey* 11.13.

[22] This same point is argued by Pierre Bonnechere in the context of human sacrifice (Bonnechere 1994, 242-43).

[23] *Odyssey* 10.494-95.

[24] *Iliad* 5.844-45.

[25] *Ibid.* 11.40-41.

while the ghost of Clytemnestra could still display the fatal wounds that her son had given her.[26] Jan N. Bremmer emphasises how the same kind of situation is depicted on vases, "where the dead [in Hades] are regularly shown with their wounds, sometimes still bandaged" (Bremmer 1983, 84). Someone who died or otherwise ended up in the land of the dead as an infant would subsequently also forever remain this way.[27] This timelessness of death relates also to the notion of a "beautiful death": the good fortune of dying while still young and the absolute importance of keeping the body intact for the obsequies.[28]

Having found how the two existential human opposites of life and death had been projected onto the ancient Greek world map, we see that the Greek *eschatia* becomes the spatial reflection of the interstructural or liminal period a person goes through at the point of dying. This was also recognised by both Homer and Apollonius of Rhodes as they let respectively the Odyssean and the Argonautic crew, at the moment when they considered themselves to be forever lost in the liminal space of the *eschatia*, imitate the ritual drawing of a veil over one's head. This was an act performed at the moment of death, for example by Hippolytus and Socrates.[29] Also Alcestis, as she returned from death, would keep herself covered with a veil.[30] This custom was, moreover, intimately connected to initiatory rites, such as those at the Eleusian mysteries: just as Demeter sat on a fleece with a veil over

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[26] Æschylus *Eumenides* 103.

[27] Cf. Homeric *Hymn to Hermes* 256-59.

[28] Cf. Vernant 1991, 50-74. Even the gods recognised this and would sometimes see to it that the corpse of someone who was especially dear to them not in any way would suffer harm (e.g. Hector's body in *Iliad* 23.184-91).

[29] *Odyssey* 10.179; Apollonius of Rhodes *Argonautica* 4.1294-96; Euripides *Hippolytus* 1457-58; Plato *Phædo* 118a; cf. Euripides *Hercules Furens* 1159-1231. The crew of Odysseus drew their cloaks over their heads as they arrived at Circe's island, the same reaction as that of the Argonauts to their ending up in the formless landscapes of Libya.

[30] Euripides *Alcestis* 1006-1125.

her face,[31] the neophytes would do this also, imitating the goddess.[32] Probably not unrelated either is how the Greek bride at her point of transition into womanhood would be sporting a veil.

Located betwixt and between the land of the dead as the realm of absolute non-being and the *polis* as the place of ideal being, the Greek *eschatia* was sandwiched between two stable geographical conditions. As can be seen in the ritual carrying out of the deceased, the *eschatia* was the area where the dead and the living could go together in a way impossible not only in the city, but also in Hades. Only the superhuman heroes Heracles and Orpheus could successfully return from the land of the dead, while the more human Odysseus never actually entered Hades but stayed on its borders. If he had gone further he would most probably, like Theseus and Perithoos, not have been able to return: his entrance would have been the geographical equivalent to his physical death.

As most versions of Heracles's journey to Hades indicate, this horizontal view of a geographical land of the dead was often complemented by a concept of Hades as a lower realm: Homer artfully combines the two notions as he has the slaughtered suitors of Penelope led by Hermes "*down* the dark ways," and then, "*past* the streams of Oceanus [...], *past* the gates of the sun and the land of dreams."[33]

If we look closer at the idea of the chthonic Hades, we find that we are led to consider other stable categories of the Greek worldview. Just as this worldview had its human dimension that divided it horizontally, it also had its divine dimension that divided it vertically. Ideally one may expect to find the divine Hades under the earth, and Hades as the land of the dead beyond the edge of the earth, though in fact it would be hard to find any ancient Greek writer who would make such a clear distinction between Hades's human and divine aspects.

This ideal duality of Hades nevertheless necessitates that the line going from *polis* to the ultimate end of the world, on which the notion

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[31] Homeric Hymn to Demeter 196-97.

[32] As for example depicted on a Neapolitan freeze. Cf. Bianchi 1976, fig. 49.

[33] *Odyssey* 24.10-13; cf. Euripides *Hercules Furens* 23-25, 426-28.

of an interstructural state is found midway, has to be redrawn so as to form something like an astructural crossroads between four different stable geographical conditions. The realm opposite the chthonic Hades was, of course, the Olympian heaven as the place of the celestial gods. Thus four distinct realms of the cosmos limiting the *eschatia* in all directions may be identified: the human *polis* in the middle, Hades, which is both the land of the dead beyond the *polis*'s utmost periphery, and the abode of the chthonic deities below the earth, as which it is countered by the fourth realm, the celestial realms above. The area that we originally saw as being mythically and ritually correlating with the interstructural phase of the Greek rites of passage — the *eschatia* — is thus found to exist not only betwixt and between the notion of human being and non-being, but also betwixt and between the two different divine spheres of the Olympians and of Hades.

Even though neither van Gennep nor Turner offered an elaborated definition of a liminal space that may be applied directly to the ancient Greek context, the term is nevertheless not totally unfamiliar in ancient Greek studies. I shall here discuss three uses of the term. However, even though all these examples offer interesting definitions, I do not consider any of them to offer a viable explanation of the intimate relation between the ancient Greek rites of passage and the geographical periphery. Stephen Scully, for example, describes a "liminal, suburban space" existing between "polis and *apolis*, city and mountain [...], human and natural order" (Scully 1990, 10; 13). Regardless of the fact that this ignores the initiatory connotations of *all* of "*apolis*," Scully never supports his use of the term by trying to link the area that he has in mind, directly or allegorically, with specific rites of passage. We are left only with an expression "liminal space" meaning nothing but a "point of transition" which refers to going in or out of town (Scully 1990, 13).

Damien P. Nelis writes about a similarly placed "liminal stage between the city and" a not very precise "land outside it" (Nelis 1991, 99). Nelis, however, identifies this area as "the realm of Artemis" (1991, 99), and it is because of the goddess's close association with Greek transitional rites from childhood to maturity that he labels this

area as liminal. This is an interesting perspective, but Nelis does not pursue this idea, either by pointing to further relations between the area in question and different rites of passage, or by looking for liminal qualities in the landscape itself. His "liminal stage" placed "between the city and the land outside it" also appears as a somewhat limited circle around the *polis*, and is actually severed from what he himself refers to as the "unknown territories" where any "long and dangerous journey" would take place (Nelis 1991, 99).

The most interesting approach I have come across so far comes from Nanno Marinatos in her analysis of Circe as a liminal figure and her island as "a liminal place" (Marinatos 1995, 134). She refers to several incidents where the experiences of Odysseus and his crew mirror Greek transitional rites, especially funerary rituals. Among her examples are the guidance of Hermes, the funerary meal of honey, barley and dairy products offered to the unfortunate comrades of Odysseus, and how the crew are made into pigs, animals "appropriate to chthonic goddesses: the transformation of the men can thus be seen as a kind of symbolic death or sacrifice."[34] She also suggests that certain natural phenomena indicate that the area itself possessed a certain liminal quality and moreover supports her interpretation by pointing to that Circe's island for Odysseus appears to be a necessary geographical stopover on the journey to and from the land of the dead. Thus, Marinatos argues, Circe functions as "the gate-keeper of the underworld" (Marinatos 1995, 137; 133).

However, Marinatos apparently seems to regard Circe's Æaea as a rather unique place in the Greek worldview. Through giving Circe's island this uniquely liminal position as "a bridge between two worlds" (Marinatos 1995, 133), Marinatos puts everything that belongs on the other side of this enchanted island — from the human cities to the wondrous landscapes of the Cyclopes and the Phæacians — into one and the same territorial category. In this way she, in fact, makes several nonsensical and fantastic parts of the *eschatia* the spatial equivalent to

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[34] Marinatos 1995, 134; for the funerary meal see *Odyssey* 10.234-35; cf. *ibid.* 10.516-21 and *ibid.* 11.26-28.

the *polis* — defining them all as the land of the living. She disregards the vast number of liminal references in so many other places in the Greek periphery.

Liminal Space and the Interstructural Confusion: The Intermingling of Humans, Gods, and the Dead

The many different ways the *eschatia* and the intermediate period of the rites of passage seem to be interrelated indicate that from the ancient Greek point of view, there existed a structural parallel between the two phenomena. They both represented states lacking structural stability, and also were placed betwixt and between culturally recognised stable conditions. As I have pointed out, the way Victor Turner defined the liminal state of the rites of passage as one "of ambiguity and paradox, a confusion of all the customary categories" (Turner 1967, 97), is a good way of describing the intermediate state of the ancient Greek rites of passage. This confusion was often described with terms of the ultimate paradox of life and death as these two states represented the starting and the ending points of the most radical of all human transitions. Apuleius even called the ritual initiation a "voluntary death."[35]

The liminal experience was nevertheless not comparable to the *state* of death, but to *dying*: death in its ultimate form was the realm one reached at the very other end of this interstructural experience, just as Heracles's encounter with Persephone was only the climax of his ordeal. Also Plutarch or Porphyry drew an intimate parallel between dying and the experience of the great mysteries: the two phenomena "correspond word for word and thing for thing."[36] Thus, according to Walter Burkert, for the ancient Greek "real death" seemed "no more than a repetition" of a passage already ritually performed (Burkert [1972], 296).

Returning to the interstructurally placed *eschatia*, we find the same sense of ambiguity and confusion as in that which I argue was its

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[35] Apuleius *Metamorphoses* 11.21.

[36] Plutarch or Porphyry according to Stobæus 4.52.49.

ritual counterpart. This confusion is again the confusion of elements properly belonging to the stable states bordering upon the liminal sphere. Following in the trail of the ancient heroes, one would discover that various aspects of death again and again might appear long *before* one reached the ultimate limit of humanity and the border of the land of the dead: elements of non-being seem somehow to have trickled into the *eschatia*. The vast area betwixt and between the two defined boundaries of the city walls and the end of the world, was, in fact, a broad border zone where neither of the two existential opposites of being and non-being dominated and where they thus paradoxically coexisted (if one may use such a term also with the notion of non-being). Immediately as he left the *polis* and its defined order of civilisation, the prototypal Greek traveller would therefore enter an area where being symbolically mingled with non-being, and life with death. In an ancient ship, the passengers would in this way never be further from death than the thickness of the side of the vessel.[37]

The mythical examples of how the *eschatia* was perceived as an area where life was paradoxically juxtaposed with death are manifold. Those who left for the *eschatia* were repeatedly considered dead though they were still alive, as, for example, Pindar's Jason as he grew up in the cave of Chiron.[38] Apollonius of Rhodes similarly let Jason's mother moan the second departure of her son — now as a young man — as if all hope of her being buried by him now was gone.[39] Abandoned in the deserted landscapes of Lemnos, Philoctetes was consequently both "*apolis*" and "a corpse among the living."[40] The ancient seer, Phineus, was apparently also veering somewhere between life and death, as he in his isolation was able to neither live nor die.[41] The geographical margins could in this way offer a possible existence removed from both life and death.

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[37] Anacharsis according to Diogenes Laërtius 1.103.

[38] Pindar *Pyth.* 4.111-15; cf. also Apollonius of Rhodes *Argonautica* 1.247-91.

[39] Apollonius of Rhodes *Argonautica* 1.268-91.

[40] Sophocles *Philoctetes* 1018.

[41] Apollonius of Rhodes *Argonautica* 2.446-48.

This connection between death and the *eschatia* is also seen in how mythical figures on the very point of death were literally removed to the geographical margins: Menelaus was promised an eternal existence after his normal lifespan, in the Elysian plain at the end of the world,[42] while many of the heroes fighting around Thebes and Troy were offered an existence at the equally peripheral islands of the blessed, away from both Hades and the normal human realm.[43] In the fifth century B.C. manner of making the barbarian geography the equivalent of mythical places, Pindar and Euripides transformed this most otherworldly place to an island in the Euxine Sea, where they conveyed both Achilles and his father, Peleus, in their afterlives.[44] It is to similar marginal areas that Iphigenia and Phrixus were transported at the very point of their death. Just as they were being sacrificed, they were both miraculously taken away — Iphigenia by Artemis to the land of the Taurians, Phrixus by an immortal ram to the land of Æëtes.[45] Also the awful sphinx apparently brought her victims to some bright, distant place.[46] None of these figures who were removed to the world's periphery, were, however, really dead. Not having entered Hades, they would remain in an ambiguous state betwixt and between life and death, a state equivalent to the geography to which they had been transported. The geographical margins in this way offered a possible existence beyond both life and death.

One may argue that these mythical examples have little to do with the real life of the ancient Greeks, but then one forgets how these stories represent the very foundation upon which the various rites of passage were based. The *eschatia* was, for example, the space that offered the adolescents access to adulthood through initiatory ordeals *"onto death"* or *"of which the end may be death."*[47] Richard Buxton

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[42] *Odyssey* 4.561-65.

[43] Hesiod *Opera et Dies* 161-69.

[44] Pindar *Nem.* 4.49-50; Euripides *Andromache* 1259-62.

[45] Euripides *Iphigenia Taurica* 26-31; Eratosthenes *Catasterismœ* 19.

[46] Euripides *Phœnissæ* 807-11.

[47] ἐπὶ καὶ θανάτῳ, Pindar *Pyth.* 4.186.

accurately expresses this connection between the prototypal *eschatia* reflected in the myths and in the ritual context of "real life": "Myth translates ritual: to leave one's city is — if you spell it out — to die" (Buxton 1994, 153). When asked who were the more numerous, the living or the dead, the legendary sixth century B.C. Græco-Scythian sage Anacharsis was said to have retorted, "where do you place those who are sailing the seas?"[48] The tales of actual, historical events could follow the mythical pattern very closely, as can be seen, for example, in the case of the fifth century B.C. Lydian king Crœsus. Just as he had put himself alive on his own funeral, the king was believed to have been snatched away by Apollo and brought to the distant lands of the Hyperboreans.[49]

The way the traveller of the *eschatia* was thought to suffer death while still alive emphasises how the *polis* represented the only space where proper human life was possible. However, by stating that *proper man* was found only in the context of the *polis*, one must at the same time also allow that the *eschatia* reflected a human *potential.* Even though the statement of Aristotle that man without the *polis* was "either a beast or a god,"[50] may be regarded as somewhat of an exaggeration, the ancient Greeks' view of the peoples surrounding them was that of a humanity that had not come to fruition. This attitude can be seen in the way these peoples often were considered not to have achieved the proper separation from either the sphere of the animals, the gods, or the dead. Accordingly, the inhabitants of the *eschatia* did few or none of the things that were deemed as essential for defining anyone as human — or at least they did not do them properly.

As we recall how life and death were placed on the ancient Greek world map, it is important not to forget the other two stable geographical states on either side of the *eschatia* — the chthonic and the Olympian spheres of the gods. The intermediate state of the ancient rites of passage reflected also a confusion of these two spheres, as

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[48] Anacharsis according to Diogenes Laërtius 1.104.

[49] Bacchylides 3.48-62.

[50] Aristotle *Politica* 1253a.

can be seen in how, for example, Lucius in Apuleius's *Metamorphosis* during his initiation met both chthonic and Olympian divinities.[51] The Roman depictions of the Greek Dionysian rites in the Villa of the Mysteries in Pompeii suggest the same idea, mixing initiates both with Olympian deities and with figures clearly belonging to Hades. The uncitylike madness of the Dionysian mysteries could accordingly be caused just as much by a number of different Olympian gods, as well as by the dead or some chthonic deity.[52]

Just as in ritual liminality, it was not only the mixed elements of human being and non-being that faced those travelling in the *eschatia*. There were repeated encounters with divinities belonging to either of those two stable conditions bordering the intermediate territory. This was recognised by Creusa — one of Apollo's many human lovers. Having exposed her infant son in a mountain cave, Creusa spoke of this cave as being both synonymous with Hades as well as a place where Apollo could reach the boy child.[53] The *eschatia* was also the region where Odysseus spent his time with both Circe and Calypso, and where Hermes and Athena advised him along the way. The heroes on the battlefields just outside the walls of Troy were similarly interrupted repeatedly by the Olympian divinities, while both Hermes and Athena assisted Heracles on his trip to Hades.[54] Apollonius in his Argonautic epic had Jason meet the chthonic goddess Hecate in a field in Colchis.[55]

Even more numerous were the many encounters between mortals and immortals taking place in the mountainsides right outside the *polis*. Anchises made love to Aphrodite amid the pines of Mount Ida,[56] while Peleus married Thetis on Mount Pelion.[57] Again, the mythical themes

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[51] Apuleius *Metamorphoses* 11.23.

[52] Cf. Schlesier 1993, 100.

[53] Euripides *Ion* 1494-96, 965.

[54] *Odyssey* 11.620-26.

[55] Apollonius of Rhodes *Argonautica* 3.1212-20.

[56] Iliad 2.820-21; *Homeric Hymn to Aphrodite* 53-291.

[57] *Cypria* according to Schol. Hom. Il. 17.140.

are also reflected in events taking place in historical times. The divine Muses, for example, taught Hesiod on the slopes of Mount Helicon,[58] while as late as in the fifth century B.C. an Athenian messenger encountered Pan by Mount Parthenium.[59] Pausanias reported that even in the second century A.D. people could still hear Pan piping on a mountain in Arcadia.[60]

Living in all respects on the very margins of the human world, the *eschatoi andrōn*, or the peoples of the periphery, were repeatedly said to be closer to the gods. The Ethiopians and the Phæacians, for example, would both have the gods participate directly at their feasts,[61] while the Hyperboreans were frequently visited by Apollo.[62]

We must be aware that the gods repeatedly appeared also inside the *polis*, even within the very homes of its citizens. These appearances, however, were restricted either to the context of rites of passage or to times when the structures of the city had been so completely obliterated that the city, in fact, had ceased to exist.[63] Otherwise, since the *polis* was the proper realm of the mortals, the gods could come only in the guise of ordinary humans.[64] This differs sharply from how, in the nonsensical and essentially uncitylike *polis* of the distant Phæacians, the gods always showed themselves in their manifest form.[65]

Reflecting the nature of this confused space, the endless number of nonsensical, reversed or negated situations exemplifies how in this realm the elements of non-being encroached upon, intermingled and even merged with the elements of being. These features provide a pre-

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[58] Hesiod *Theogonia* 22-23.

[59] Herodotus 6.105.

[60] Pausanias 8.36.8.

[61] *Odyssey* 1.25-26, 7.200-6.

[62] Pindar *Pyth.* 10.34-36.

[63] In a number of Euripides's tragedies different gods appear in their true form as the ruling king has been killed and the civic order more or less annihilated. Cf. Thetis in *Andromache* 1231ff, Dionysus in *Bacchæ* 1330ff, the Dioscuri in *Electra* 1224ff, and Apollo in *Orestes* 1625ff.

[64] Cf. e.g. *Iliad* 3.121-22, 3.385-88.

[65] *Odyssey* 7.200-6.

cise manifestation of the liminal condition "of ambiguity of paradox, a confusion of all the customary categories" (Turner 1967, 97), a definition that also fits the ancient Greek *rites* of passage. This general confusion between aspects of being and non-being, chthonic and divine elements experienced by travellers of the liminal space of the *eschatia* accurately reflected the experience of those who ventured into ritual liminality.

As one left the *polis*, the centre of the Greek world, one consequently encountered a complete blur of the distinctions between gods, living men, and the dead. This confusion with its ultimate paradox of simultaneous being and non-being was also reflected in instances of paradoxical recombinations of human, divine and animal elements, in the context of both spatial and ritual liminality. Parallel to how the space of *polis* represented such an all-encompassing framework that no aspect of civilised society was left unaffected, the *eschatia* was an area with a paradoxical essence that was reflected in the existence of those peoples who permanently inhabited the area. The humanoid Phæacians and the Cyclopes were, for example, all "near kin to the gods,"[66] and even the not so distant Egyptians were to some extent seen as a people directly descended from the gods.[67] The blameless Ethiopians were also definitively superhuman: after having reached an age of 120 years or more, their dead bodies were free from decay and were kept in transparent coffins among the living.[68] Not properly human, these peoples were free from the mortal restraints of the normal existence of man in the *polis*.

According to both mythical and historical accounts, the *eschatia* was also teeming with all kinds of zoomorphic hybrids like centaurs, satyrs, sirens, and sphinxes. In distant Libya and India, men with dog-heads were not uncommon — at least according to the fifth century B.C. geographies of Herodotus and Æschylus.[69] All structural restrictions

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[66] *Ibid.* 5.35-36, 7.205-6.

[67] *Ibid.* 4.232.

[68] Herodotus 3.24.

[69] *Ibid.* 4.191; Æschylus according to Strabo 1.2.35.

were disregarded in these accounts, just as with the descriptions of the ecstatic mænads who had followed Dionysus out to the mountainsides outside of Thebes, where Euripides described them as suckling fawns and wolf-cubs.[70] Similar intimate scenes between humans and beasts can be found in the fresco in the Pompeiian Villa of the Mysteries.

Whoever entered the liminal state could never be sure within which category he or she would end up. Accordingly, the nuptial rites of passage could not only be characterised by the participators sometimes donning the guise of satyrs, but also by a temporary negation of the categories of gender.[71] In the mysteries at the shrine of Lycæan Zeus taking place in an Arcadian cave, the participators risked being turned into wolves,[72] not unlike some of the more unfortunate travellers of the *eschatia*. Actæon, Callisto, and the hapless comrades of Odysseus all ended up as animals,[73] while the Neurian inhabitants of Scythia regularly shifted between being humans and wolves.[74] Having been transformed into a heifer roaming the periphery, it is not surprising that Io should be called a "mænad of Hera."[75] The occasional mortal could on the other hand also be turned into a god in the periphery, as happened to Heracles, Iphigenia, Ino and her son Melicertes,[76] and as was offered as a possibility to Odysseus by Calypso.[77]

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[70] Euripides *Bacchæ* 699-700.

[71] Cf. Burkert [1977], 259; Plutarch *Quæstiones Græcæ* 304cd; Plutarch *De mulierum virtutibus* 245ef.

[72] Plato *Respublica* 565d.

[73] Æschylus *Prometheus* 663-76; Pseudo-Apollodorus *Bibliotheca* 3.4.4, 3.8.2; *Odyssey* 10.234-40.

[74] Herodotus 4.105.

[75] Æschylus *Supplices* 562-64.

[76] Heracles became immortal after his body had been burnt on the pyre at the Thracian Mount Œta (Pseudo-Apollodorus *Bibliotheca* 2.7.7). According to Hesiod (Pausanias 1.43.1) and the author of the *Cypria* (Proclus *Chrestomathy* 1), Iphigenia was made immortal by Artemis on her transferal to the geographical margins. Ino and her son Melicertes were transformed into the sea deities Leucothea and Palæmon upon throwing themselves into the ocean (*Odyssey* 5.333-35; Pseudo-Apollodorus *Bibliotheca* 3.4.3).

[77] *Odyssey* 7.256-57.

The Ultimate Confusion: The Deconstruction of Time and Space as Separate Categories

The confusion found in both the intermediate period of the rites of passage and in the intermediate geography was nevertheless not restricted to a confusion of the characteristics of those who normally inhabited the culturally recognised conditions that limited the *eschatia*. It also implied a confusion of the absolute opposites of being and non-being, which entailed that all aspects of the understood reality were negated, even those of time and space. This, however, is not the same as saying that notions of time and space were not at all present in the ambiguous, liminal sphere, as what seems to have been the case in the land of the dead. The years Odysseus spent on Calypso's island were real years, long and enduring, just as ordeals like the straits of Scylla and Charybdis and the Clashing Rocks were nothing but extremely physically tangible. Also the mysteries had defined geographical settings, like Eleusis or Samothrace, and strict timetables as well.

Since Hades, as the absolute antithesis of *polis* and its proper time and space, was perceived as an area void of both time and space, the liminal state placed betwixt and between those two culturally recognised states would represent that ultimate paradox of simultaneous space *and* non-space, time *and* non-time. Such interstructural confusion with regard to time was manifested in phenomena such as evening touching dawn — as in the land of the Læstrygonians[78] — a negation of the very structure that form time through the division of night and day. On the island of the Phæacians the cycles that defined the seasonal changes of the year had been eliminated accordingly — a mere look at the gardens of the island would demonstrate this. Different fruits were found to be simultaneously in all stages of ripeness, from merely sprouting to being ready to pick.[79] That Herodotus could report that in Libya summer was eternal is an accurate observation, but it nev-

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[78] *Ibid.* 10.86.
[79] *Ibid.* 7.116-26.

ertheless fits perfectly with the Greeks' perception of the periphery.[80]
The normal concept of time was similarly confused in the mysteries:
Apuleius's Lucius could describe how "the sun shines brightly about
midnight,"[81] while Plutarch or Porphyry experienced swift shifts be-
tween utter darkness and the brightest of lights during initiation.[82]

The sense of space within the liminal state was accordingly just
as confused. The huge rocks which represented an initiatory ordeal
for the heroic Argonauts, were, for example, said to be "moving" or
"bewildering."[83] It is also obvious that the original routes of both Argo
and Odysseus went far outside any of the Mediterranean itineraries
ancient and modern rationalists later have tried to straitjacket them
into, far off into nonsensical landscapes that can never be put on any
map.[84] As Nanno Marinatos points out, on Circe's island Odysseus and
his crew are unable to tell west from east, "nor where the Sun [. . .] goes
under the earth nor where he rises."[85] It is no straightforward landscape
either, which the Eleusian initiate of Plutarch or Porphyry had to
navigate through: "In the beginning there is straying and wandering,
the weariness of running this way and that, and nervous journeys
through darkness that reach no goal, and possible terror, shivering and
trembling and sweating and amazement."[86] Apuleius, in his rendering
of later Hellenistic rites could tell about similar experiences, as the
initiate was "ravished through the elements."[87]

The most radical implication of this absence of proper spatial and
temporal structures would be that nothing could be distinguished from
anything else. The *eschatia* offered accordingly several examples of
how everything thus ceaselessly floated together. The *Odyssey*, for

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[80] Herodotus 2.26.

[81] Apuleius *Metamorphoses* 11.23.

[82] Stobæus 4.52.49.

[83] *Planktai* in Odyssey 12.59-72.

[84] Cf. Endsjø 1997.

[85] *Odyssey* 10.190-92; Marinatos 1995, 133.

[86] Plutarch or Porphyry according to Stobæus 4.52.49.

[87] Apuleius *Metamorphoses* 11.23.

example, describes the dramatic land of the Cimmerians at the end of the world, where darkness was never-ending and where everything was eternally "wrapped in mist and cloud."[88] This seems to relate to how Hesiod talked of the furthest land beyond Oceanus as either "dark and concealed," "towards Night," or simply "cloudy" or "dim."[89] Aristophanes operated with a landscape of "darkness and mire" close to the gates of Hades,[90] while Herodotus, on his part, believed that there were areas in the ultimate north where the air was so full of either snow or feathers that one could neither see nor travel any further.[91] Similar to these confusing geographies was the realm beyond Heracles's pillars where a dark fog forever cloaked the air and the water. This is, at least, how the fifth century B.C. Carthaginian explorer Himilco described this region according to the fourth century A.D. Latin writer Festus Rufus Avienus.[92] If one travelled far enough, even the water would be so viscous that the progress of any ship would be impeded — shallows and masses of seaweed would eventually render impossible all movement and thus further indicate the absolute confusion of the elements.[93] Apollonius of Rhodes had the Argonauts stranded in a similar astructural landscape of the Syrtes, which he placed allegorically in "the furthest ends of Libya."[94] This confusion is even more obvious in the travel log of the fourth century B.C. Greek captain Pytheas of Massalia who, on his journey to the world's edge in the ultimate north, encountered a complete negation of all separate

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[88] *Odyssey* 11.15-16.

[89] Hesiod *Theogonia* 334-35, 275, 294, cf. 729-31.

[90] Aristophanes *Ranæ* 273.

[91] Herodotus 4.31.

[92] Festus Rufus Avienus *Ora Maritima* 386-89. This may sound somewhat removed from a context of ancient Greece, but Avienus assumably based himself on a Greek version of Himilco's story that probably had more in common with Hellenic presuppositions than with the original secret Carthaginian log: "Almost all scholars consider it unlikely that Avienus had direct access to Himilco's account of the northwestern sea" (Murphy 1977, 29).

[93] Festus Rufus Avienus *Ora Maritima* 120-26.

[94] Apollonius of Rhodes *Argonautica* 1.81, 4.1227.

basic entities of the physical world: he was checked by a formless mass comprising of "neither earth, nor sea, nor air, but" at the same time "a kind of mixture of these."[95]

Aspects of Primordiality

Examining all these amorphous experiences of both ritual and geographical liminality, we are struck by another aspect if we try to perceive this experience from the context of the ancient Greek worldview. As everything was confused, it appears as if no separation had ever taken place. This, however, is exactly the point! With its continuous confusion of human, divine and all other elements of the Greek cosmos, the space of the *eschatia* and everything that it enclosed had apparently escaped the primeval separation of the elements into proper categories. While various aspects of the cosmos once had been sorted out of the original flux, this area had remained as something like a primeval rest, forever ambiguous and paradoxical.

Describing this area of confusion as simply "the past" would, however, be to simplify the matter. The state of the *eschatia* was distinct both from the proper time of the *polis and* the static non-time of Hades. Therefore, to say that the time of the *eschatia* simply reflected the time "before" the time of the proper human life of the city would be contradictory to the very nature of the *eschatia*, since the term "before" in itself belonged to the temporal categories of the *polis*. In the liminal state of the ancient Greeks the past, the present and the future would all float together — the aspects of time had not been structured. The knowledge possessed by the half-dead, interstructurally placed figure of Phineus, was accordingly in no manner limited by the usual temporal and spatial restrictions: his "mind" (*noos*) knew "everything" that had happened and that would happen.[96]

How the geographical liminality of the ancient Greeks represented a confusion of the past, the present, and the future, was also the way the state of the primordial chaos was perceived by the Greeks.

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[95] Strabo 2.4.1.

[96] Apollonius of Rhodes *Argonautica* 2.212.

As the primordial state was one of total undifferentiation, the proper categories of time had not been defined either. In consequence, the depictions of the liminal state frequently contained allusions to the primordial. This, for example, was quite literally the case with the motley ensemble of various creatures following Circe, as described by Apollonius of Rhodes. These figures consisted of limbs apparently so haphazardly assembled that they resembled neither beasts nor humans. The poet himself connected these creatures with autochthonous forms of life that appeared automatically out of the first formless substance — an idea that Apollonius seems to have taken from Empedocles's theories on the creation.[97] The amorphous landscapes of Himilco and Pytheas may similarly be associated with the primordial stew Anaximander considered to have preceded everything.[98] The *apeiron*, Anaximander's "boundless" matter, may also linguistically be tied to a term used on the geographical margins. James S. Romm points to how both Homer and Hesiod frequently use the adjective *apeirōn* to describe the "boundless" state of both land and sea outside the *polis*.[99] Moreover, just as these *apeirōn* landscapes of Homer and Hesiod can be considered to have represented something like a primeval leftover, Anaximander thought the primordial *apeiron* lingered on in the periphery, surrounding all the worlds or series of right order (*kosmoi*).[100] Anaximander's *apeiron* encompassed "the known world in time as well as in space" (Kahn 1960, 237). This continuous existence of *to apeiron* is also reflected in how Hesiod's mythical *chaos* "survived" the act of creation.[101]

This structural identification of the uncivilised geography with the original, primordial flux out of which no autonomous realm ever had

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[97] *Ibid.* 4.672-81; Aëtius 5.19.5. For a more extensive survey of the fragments on Empedocles's zoogonic theories cf. Kirk, Raven & Schofield 1957, 302-5.

[98] Aristotle *Physica* 203a.

[99] Cf. Romm 1992, 10. *Apeirōn gaia* in *Iliad* 7.446; *Odyssey* 1.98, 5.46, 15.79, 17.386, 19.107; Hesiod *Theogonia* 187. *Apeirōn pontos* in *Iliad* 1.350; Hesiod *Theogonia* 678. Cf. *Odyssey* 4.510, 10.195; Hesiod *Theogonia* 109.

[100] Hippolytus *Refutatio omnium hæresium* 1.6.1-2.

[101] Cf. Hesiod *Theogonia* 813-14.

been separated, is probably again what was hinted at by Apollonius of Rhodes when, at the moment of the Argo's departure from the *polis*, he had Orpheus singing about "how the earth, the heaven and the sea once mingled together."[102] The idea that the inhabitants of the *eschatia*, as previously demonstrated, reflected an unfulfilled human potential, is also an aspect that may be interpreted as an allusion to an earlier stage in human evolution: at least, such an identification was positively made by Thucydides.[103] The very absence of the *polis* was in itself a feature typical of the distant past,[104] just as the lack of proper sacrifice reflected the original state not only before the schism between man and god,[105] but also before the invention of cooking — the art that distinguished man from the wild beasts.[106] The eating of raw meat was subsequently a custom found both in the rites of the Dionysian mysteries and in numerous societies of the *eschatia*, as the mythical Cyclopes and the non-Greek Eurytanians in Ætolia.[107]

The Ritual Imitation of the Eschatia

After considering the vast number of ritual, mythical and structural parallels between the two phenomena which I have defined as ritual and geographical liminality, the only major difference we were left with initially was that the intermediate state of rites of passage represented a liminal period of *time*, created ritually, while the *eschatia* constituted a liminal *space*. The many examples of how even the proper notions of time and space are negated both in the rites of passage and in the *eschatia*, remove even this last difference between the two phenomena as they were perceived by the Greeks.

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[102] Apollonius of Rhodes *Argonautica* 1.496-97.

[103] Thucydides 1.6.

[104] Iliad 20.216-18; Homeric Hymn to Hephæstus 3-4; Plato Leges 677a-81e.

[105] Hesiod *Theogonia* 535-57, cf. Vernant [1979], 24. Plato wrote more generally of his ancestors living "nearer the gods" (*Philebus* 16c).

[106] Athenæus 660e-f; cf. Hesiod *Opera et Dies* 276-78.

[107] Thucydides 3.94.

Were ritual and geographical liminality thus actually one and the same phenomenon? Here, the answer seems to be both yes and no. Regardless whether one entered this liminal state through ritual means, or spatially through going into the *eschatia*, the experience should ideally be the same. The *eschatia*, however, represented in all its flux an enduring entity reflecting an actual everlasting primordiality. The liminality of the rites of passage, on the other hand, was in spite of its primordial aspects only a passing moment when the structures of human civilisation were reversed. In this way it is not surprising that there was a clear notion of the various rites of passage actually representing an *imitation* of the geographical state outside of the city. And as an imitation of these areas, these rites would also frequently involve encounters with the prototypal denizens of the *eschatia*, such as satyrs and sileni, nymphs and pans. One could also within the setting of the transitional rituals be transformed into one of these ambiguous creatures,[108] just as was always the extreme possibility in the *eschatia*.

As the *polis* represented a set of positive structures reflecting the human existence, the state of primordial liminality could be recreated by explicitly bringing in some aspect of absolute negation, symbolically representing either the non-existence of the dead, or the divine elements of either the Olympian or the chthonic gods. Such juxtaposition would automatically negate all given structures, even those of proper time and space. As the liminal state of the transitional rituals thus reflected an imitation of the *eschatia*, the myths accordingly refer to how the various rites had originated in the periphery. The founders of the rites were, for example, repeatedly thought to have journeyed through the landscapes distant from the Greek *polis*. Dionysus and his ecstatic followers travelled through the marginal landscapes of Bactria, Persia and Arabia,[109] while Persephone, in the myth that rendered the very pattern for the Eleusian mysteries, was transported over a variety of landscapes, all the way to the land of the dead.[110] Apart from such

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[108] Plato *Leges* 815c; Strabo 10.3.10.

[109] Euripides *Bacchæ* 13-20.

[110] *Homeric Hymn to Demeter* 33-37.

divine origins, the Greeks could at times also consider the mysteries to have originated with the *peoples* who inhabited the distant geography.[111] Barbarian words were, for example, said to be central components of the secret sayings uttered during the rites,[112] and non-Greek musical instruments were important elements in the Dionysian mysteries. While the actual historical origin of the Greek rites of passage will probably forever elude us, the way the ancient Greeks themselves considered these rituals to have developed thus agree completely with van Gennep's view that the physical passage represented the very origin of the various rites of transition.[113]

The ancient Greek notion of the periphery represented, of course, no objective view of these distant landscapes, but was the result of an extensive cultural process. Leaving his city, the ancient Greek would bring with him a mythical map, a map that would describe the landscape with the nonsensical structures reflecting the liminal state. The subject would thus possess a detailed description of even *unknown* territories long before he would enter it — a map that would present the main categories with which one organised what one would experience. As the various mythical, historical and geographical sources indicate, there were no clear boundaries between a perceived rational understanding and a perceived mythical understanding of the *eschatia*. The myths rendered in this way the most extreme possibilities, but as the series of historical incidents would demonstrate, the periphery could still be seen as reflecting a primordial existence, and, with this in mind, one could never rule out the chance of neither a hierophanic experience nor a theranthropic transformation.

Living in small communities surrounded by such wondrous and mythical landscapes, why did the Greeks want to imitate this liminal state in their rituals? Despite the conceptions of how the prototypal hero nearly almost would endure some fantastic ordeal every time he ventured into the *eschatia*, most people would neither experience a

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[111] Euripides *Bacchæ* 64-67; Diodorus of Sicily 1.22.23.

[112] Iamblichus *De Mysteriis* 7.4.

[113] Cf. van Gennep [1909], 22.

primordial union with gods every time they took a walk in the un-cultivated woods, nor would they have their social status permanently altered. We must allow for a certain mythical exaggeration. Whereas the denizen of the *polis* going into the *apolis* in historical times always *could* happen to meet some deity or to be turned into a wolf, such serious consequences were always an *imminent* possibility for the ancient hero of the myths. The ritual context, however, could assure that those who were initiated in some sense would have that experience which the *eschatia* always ought to be reflecting.

Having in this way gone through the extensive parallels between the ancient Greek rites of passage and their view of their own geographical periphery, I have tried to demonstrate how the ritual theories of Arnold van Gennep and Victor Turner may help us come to terms with the logic of what at first seemed like a very odd suggestion of Heracles. Having defined the *eschatia* as a liminal space not only through its location betwixt and between all stable and culturally recognised geographical conditions of the Greek world view, but also through its intrinsic quality of general confusion, I have argued that behind the intimate ties between this area and the intermediate state of the rites of passage lay a notion of synonymy. Liminal time and liminal space were, in fact, only two facets of the same phenomenon. This is why Heracles could propose to put an end to the Eleusian rites, recognising that the mysteries were only the human *imitation* of the ideal view of the geographical periphery found not only betwixt and between the city of human life and the land of the dead, but also betwixt and between the Olympian sphere and the chthonic Hades. Having completed that ultimate journey through the *eschatia* all the way to the realm of Persephone, and back, Heracles had indeed "experienced far truer mysteries."

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THE HOLY MAN'S HUT AS A SYMBOL OF STABILITY IN JAPANESE BUDDHIST PILGRIMAGE

Mark W. MacWilliams

Summary

In this paper, I examine the way holy men's huts are portrayed in eighteenth cen-
tury Buddhist tales from the Saikoku and Bandô Japanese Buddhist pilgrimage routes.
These stories suggest that holy men's huts are ultimately located in places beyond the
ordinary human life of suffering, marked as it is by impermanence and instability. That
the hermit's hut transcends the transient world is indicated in two important ways in
these tales. First, the holy men's statues of the Buddhist celestial bodhisattva Kannon,
which they carry or carve while on the road, display a preternatural mobility or im-
mobility which force the ascetics to stop their peregrination. Second, the places they
build their huts to enshrine the statues are revealed as spiritual places (*reijô*), Pure
Land paradises where the living Kannon has a permanent abode. These holy men's
huts were the prototypes of the Saikoku and Bandô temples that continue to attract
multitudes of Japanese pilgrims who travel there even today seeking freedom from
the sorrows of transmigration.

Why is pilgrimage so important in Japanese Buddhism? The sim-
ple answer is that it offers a chance to step outside of every day life
by traveling to a sacred center "out there" that is extraordinarily pow-
erful and meaningful for people's existence. A good example of such
a Japanese Buddhist pilgrimage is to temples that enshrine spiritually
powerful icons of the bodhisattva Kannon. Kannon is a great being
(*Mahāsattva*) of mercy and compassion who saves beings from suffer-
ing. According to the *Lotus Sutra*, as well as a variety of other short
esoteric Buddhist sutras detailing the merits of specific devotional
forms, Kannon offers many thisworldly benefits (*genze riyaku*) to al-
leviate various woes, such as suffering by fire, drowning, execution,
barrenness, murder, curses from poisonous snakes and dangerous

ghosts.[1] Moreover, in other important sutras, such as the *Shin kegon-gyô*, Kannon secures the rebirth (*ôjô*) of suffering beings into the bodhisattva's own Pure Land paradise on Mount Potalaka (Fudaraku).[2] Given these salvific powers, it is no wonder that Kannon faith spread rapidly among the Japanese people. Many Kannon temples originated as "wonder retreats in the wilderness" (*reigen no aranya*), founded by wandering holy men (*hijiri*), who enshrined a spiritually powerful icon of Kannon there. By the end of twelfth century, the number of these temples formed such an impressive array that the famous Kôfuku-ji priest Jôkei (1155-1212) noted that "from near the capital to as faraway as the land of the eastern barbarians, located on high mountains and in deep valleys, there are many spiritual locales (*reijô*) dedicated to Kannon."[3] Their number only increased in succeeding centuries as Kannon temples spread throughout Japan, especially in the Kantô area. By the 18th century, these temples had become organized into two famous pilgrimage (*junrei*) circuits that attracted many pilgrims — the Saikoku thirty three temple route (centered in the Kinai region) and the Bandô thirty three temple route (centered in the Kantô region) routes. What was it that attracted pilgrims to these Kannon temples?

This question is important because, at least from one perspective within the Japanese Buddhist tradition, the idea of travel to a sacred center as a way to find release from suffering is open to question. In medieval Buddhist literature, one often finds a radically "utopian vision" to borrow Jonathan Z. Smith's phrase, a view that emphasizes in the strict sense "the value of being in no place."[4] In the texts of this period, there is no place human beings can go in this world to escape the suffering caused by ephemerality (*mujô*). There is nowhere

[1] Leon Hurvitz, trans., *Scripture of the Lotus Blossom of the Fine Dharma (The Lotus Sûtra)* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1976), 316-19.

[2] Thomas Cleary, trans., *The Flower Ornament Scripture: A Translation of the Avatamsaka Sutra*, 3 vols (Boston: Shambala Publications, 1984-87), 3:155.

[3] Nakamura Hajime, Kasahara Kazuo, and Kanaoka Shôyû, eds., *Ajia Bukkyôshi Nihonhen*, 9 vols (Tokyo: Kôsei Shuppansha, 1972-76), 3:225.

[4] Jonathan Z. Smith, *Map is not Territory* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993), 102.

we can go in this life to escape from the reality of sickness, old age, and death. Transience as the fundamental source of sorrow for human beings is often represented by the metaphor of travel. It is an obvious association since, as people pass their lives, they also move through space. Buddhists saw life's passage as a "course" or "road," which divides into six paths of rebirth available for sentient beings (*rokudô*); one can be reborn either as a god, titan, human, ghost, animal or denizen of hell. Transit in the *rokudô* is the key spatial metaphor for *mujô*, from Kyôkai's early ninth century tale collection, the *Nihon koku genpô zenaku ryôiki*, to the itinerant holy man Ippen Shônin's famous thirteenth century work, *A Gist of Empty Words* (*Hyakurikugo*), with its bleak opening verse: "While transmigrating through the six paths (*rokudô*), there's no one for company; alone we are born, alone we die: full of sorrow this road of birth and death."[5] Looking at texts such as Ippen's, it is clear that the historian of travel Eric Leed is correct when he argues that "travel is the most common source of metaphors used to explicate transformations and transitions of all sorts. We draw upon the experience of human mobility to define the meaning of death (as a 'passing'). . ."[6] Since everything in the world is *mujô*, human beings who are "transients" have no fixed or final resting-place that they can call their spiritual abode. Such a view of space is utopian since there is no place to escape the road of birth and death.

By the twelfth century, as William R. LaFleur has convincingly argued, the *rokudô* as a literary *topos* for impermanence had been combined with a second metaphor in the writings of the period. Not only human life, but also the space within which living "takes place" is transient. The second major metaphor for *mujô* is the human dwelling. The classical example appears in the poet holy man Kamo no Chômei's (1153-1216) essay, *The Account of My Hut* (*Hôjôki*). Chômei's essay

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[5] Dennis Hirota, *No Abode: The Record of Ippen* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1997), 7. See also Matsubara Tetsumyô, *Saikoku junrei no tabi: Kannon no kokoro* (Tokyo: Kôsei, 1986), 1.

[6] Eric Leed, *The Mind of the Traveler from Gilgamesh to Global Tourism* (New York: Basic Books, 1991), 3.

begins by noting how the built-to-last palaces of the capital are in fact not what they appear to be:

> The flow of the river is ceaseless and its waters are never the same. The bubbles that float in the pools, now vanishing, now forming, are not of long duration: so in the world are man and his dwellings. It might be imagined that the houses, great and small, which vie roof against proud roof in the capital remain unchanged from one generation to the next, but when we examine whether this is true, how few are the houses that were of old. Some were burnt last year and only since rebuilt; great houses have crumbled into hovels and those who dwell in them have fallen no less. The city is the same, the people are as numerous as ever, but of those I used to know, a bare one or two in twenty remain. They die in the morning, they are born in the evening, like foam on the water.[7]

Not just life itself, but also the homes "great and small" in which people live are characterized by "instability." In the *Hôjôki*, the "per-manent" palaces of the capital, which are built on "solid" foundations, are all destroyed by the unpredictable catastrophes of fires, typhoons, earthquakes and famines that strike the capital in rapid succession. They cannot last because nothing stays the same no matter how much one tries to keep it so in this world of *mujô*. Indeed, the houses are doomed to destruction because they are foolishly made. They cannot be moved out of harm's way and therefore are inevitably swept away in time. By contrast, Chômei's "little impermanent hut" is ideal precisely because it is makeshift, it is intentionally not constructed to stand for eternity:

> It is a bare ten feet square and less than seven feet high. I did not choose this particular spot rather than another, and I built my house without consulting diviners. I laid a foundation and roughly thatched a roof. I fastened hinges to the joints of the beams, the easier to move elsewhere should anything displease me. What difficulty would there be in changing my dwelling? A bare two carts would suffice to carry off the whole house, and except for the carrier's fee there would be no expenses at all.[8]

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[7] William R. LaFleur, *The Karma of Words* (Berkeley, Ca: University of California Press, 1983), 62.

[8] Ibid., 63.

If the need arises, Chômei's hut can easily be taken down and carted away whenever the vagaries of life take him on his lonely journey. Chômei's itinerant life with his movable hut offers a spiritual response to *mujô* that is "utopian." According to LaFleur, this very mobility makes possible being "in harmony on all levels with the laws of impermanence and instability." And, from a Buddhist point of view, it also offers a way of spiritual discipline for the "unparalleled practice for dying and being reborn," analogously pointing ultimately "to moving with facility through a series of incarnations toward the goal of nirvana."[9] The impermanent hut (*iori, sôan*), therefore, offers a life of spiritual freedom because it mitigates the negative effects of transmigration by flowing with change rather than struggling against it, as the traveling hermit follows the path of least resistance.

LaFleur argues that Chômei's movable hut is "the most representative of the medieval view of the hermitage." Indeed, there are many stories of holy men like Chômei who were itinerants, some of them using the pilgrimage circuits (*meguri*) as their primary means of practicing austerities (*shûgyo*). An example is Gyôkû, who is known as "one night *hijiri*" in the eleventh century Buddhist tale collection, the *Dai Nihonkoku hoke-kyô kenki*, because of his penchant for never staying in the same place more than one night "while traveling and practicing the way."[10] However, travel is not only understood as metaphor for transience in Japanese Buddhism. A second way of envisioning the structure of life is as a pilgrimage, or a journey to a sacred center "out there." It is this latter metaphorical usage of travel to an ultimate spiritual goal or destination that applies to the hermits who founded the Kannon temples along the Saikoku and Bandô routes.

What we see in the stories about how these hermits founded Kannon temples is a different notion of space and place than found in Chômei's *Hôjôki*. Saikoku and Bandô holy men traveled deep into the mountains to places that were revered as sacred areas from ancient times. It is

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[9] Ibid., 65.

[10] Yoshiko K. Dykstra, *Miraculous Tales of the Lotus Sutra from Ancient Japan* (Kansai, Japan: KUFS, 1983), 5.

in these sacred places, like Yoshino and Katsuragi of Yamato and Kumano of Kii, that holy men build their huts as permanent abodes for spiritual practice. It is their "wonder retreats in the wilderness" that eventually become the goal of pilgrimage for monks, aristocrats, and even ordinary lay people who follow. In these holy men's stories, we find a new vision of the hut that is built on a sacred site, one that is based on a locative understanding that emphasizes the value of place. The story of the wandering ascetic Shôku (909-1007) or "Shosha Shônin," who built his hermit's hut on Shosha-zan in 966, is a case in point. According to the *Hôke-kyô kenki*:

> For difficult ascetic practices, he lived in a hut in a deep mountain where not a single bird was heard. He spent days without meals and months without fire. The marvelous power of the *Hôke-kyô* and of his priestly robe protected his physical self, which was as transient as the overnight dew. Sometimes he dreamed of having a tray of delicacies. Even after he awoke, his stomach felt full and his mouth held a delicious taste. At another time he dreamed of beautiful white rice appearing from the sutra. . ... On a severely cold night, Shôku's unclothed body became as cold as ice, but as he recited the sutra and withstood the coldness, a thick quilted robe descended of its own accord from the ceiling of the hut and covered his body. Someone concealing his identity came and asked questions. Might it be a bodhisattva or a buddha?

Such extraordinary incidents frequently happened to Shôku.[11]

By staying inside his hut, which becomes a ritual space for reciting and copying the *Lotus Sûtra*, Shôku gains freedom from the deleterious effects of *mujô*. He no longer suffers from the ordinary bodily pangs of hunger and cold that are the lot of anyone living in this world because in his hut "beautiful white rice" pours from the sutra, "a thick quilted robe" flutters down from the ceiling, and even buddhas and bodhisattvas come to serve as Shôku's companions. By practicing austerities in his hut on Mount Shosha, his every need is met without stepping outside into the ordinary world. His religious needs are met as well. Shôku becomes spiritually transformed such that people feel that "they had met a Buddha" when they meet him. Here, the important

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[11] Ibid., 71-72.

feature of Shôku's hut is its immobility. Mount Shosha is Shôku's mountain as his alternate name Shosha Shônin suggests. Mount Shosha is a stable and permanent home in a second sense as well. Shôku is credited as the carver of a spiritually powerful image of Kannon, and as the founder in 970 of Engyô-ji, the temple that houses it. For these reasons recounted in the temple's origin legend (*engi*), Engyô-ji, in later centuries, became temple twenty-seven of the Saikoku pilgrimage.

In the founding of the temple tale, the hermit's goal is to escape the negative effects of the *mujô*. This is done is by traveling to spiritual places that have a strong karmic connection (*uen*) with Kannon. In the Saikoku and Bandô *engi*, found in the mid-eighteenth pilgrimage guides called *reijôki* (or, records of spiritual places), which draw from narrative traditions dating much earlier, the hermit's journey is best described as an exit off the *rokudô*. While this can be seen, for instance, in Shôku's tale from the *Hôke-kyô kenki* discussed above, it is even more clearly depicted in the later *Saikoku reijôki* account of the origin of Engyô-ji. According to this text, after spending twelve years practicing the *hôke zanmai* in a cave on Mount Seburi in Echizen, Shôku perfected his spiritual powers and gained fame as a monk.

> One night a heavenly child came (to his cave) and told him, "I am a messenger from the heavenly kings Bonten and Taishaku. If you want to serve Kanzeon, Mount Shosha in Harima province is a Kannon Pure Land *reijô*. That is where you should go for austerities." After that, Shôku climbed Mount Shosha and built a thatched hut (*shiba no iori o musubu*). He never stopped reciting the Lotus Sutra. One night a heavenly being descended, and with hands clasped in worship, chanted Buddhist quatrains (*shiku no fumi*) before a cherry tree beside his hut. When Shôku saw this he asked him, "Why are you just worshipping that cherry tree?" The heavenly being replied, "Thankfully, this tree is a spirit tree (*reiboku*) of Kanzeon. Quickly take this tree and make (an image of) Kanzeon. If you enshrine it on this spot, it will become a *reijô* with a karmic connection (*uen*) that can give benefits (*riyaku*) to sentient beings living in the Final Age. This is my wish, Shônin, that (a temple) should be quickly built." He carved the main

image from the cherry mentioned by the divine messenger and, with help from other people, made his hut into a Buddha hall. This was Shoshadera.[12]

Here, Shôku's hut is not just anywhere, but is located, as the heavenly messenger from Bonten and Taishaku tells him, at a Pure Land *reijô* of Kannon. The image is made by him from a "spirit tree" on the site which, according to the divine instructions, is enshrined on the same spot. The hut of thatch that serves as the holy man's hut in the *Hôke-kyô kenki* tale is transformed here into a Buddha hall where the main image of Kannon is enshrined so that pilgrims living in the Final Age (*massei*) can worship it.

In what follows, I want to look more closely at two important spatial motifs in the Saikoku and Bandô pilgrimage tales. They suggest that the holy man's move is ultimately to a place beyond impermanence and instability. That the hermit's hut stands outside of this world of *mujô*, and not within it, is indicated in two important ways in the tales. First, the Kannon statue that a holy man carries with him or carves displays a preternatural mobility or immobility, which results in his building of a hut/temple on the site in which it is permanently enshrined. Second, the hut itself serves as a resting place for the ascetic where he can perform austerities for the greater good of those suffering in this world of *mujô*. Both motifs suggest that the holy man's hut (and later pilgrimage temple or *reijô*) with its spiritually powerful Kannon icon is a conduit for moving human beings off the *rokudô* — from a life of painful instability to the Jôdo, the Pure Land paradise of Amida and Kannon.

Preternatural Immobility and Mobility of Kannon Images

In the Saikoku and Bandô pilgrimage tales, holy men are not portrayed as aimless wanderers. They travel for a purpose: to find a suitable site to build a Kannon temple. A key indication that they have discovered the right spot is when the Kannon statue they are carrying suddenly becomes so heavy that it cannot be carried any further. With

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[12] Kôyô Shunô and Tsujimoto Kitei, *Saikoku sanjûsansho Kannon reijôki*, in *Saikoku Bandô Kannon reijôki*, ed. by Kanezashi Shôzô (Tokyo: Seiabô, 1973), 184-5.

the preternatural immobility of the statue, the ascetic realizes that the bodhisattva has chosen the site for a new temple.

An example of this is the origin tale of the Rokkaku-dô (*SR*-18). After traveling for some time in the hot sun, Shôtoku Taishi decided to stop and rest in the cool shade of a forest. He put his small Kannon statue on the branch of a willow tree while he washed himself in a pure stream nearby. When he tried to take the statue off the branch, however, it had become so heavy that he could not lift it. In a later dream oracle, the statue notified him that it would stay there to save the many people who will pass by "in the final ages." The Kannon commanded Prince Shôtoku to build a six-sided temple there. After this, an old woman appeared who led him to a large cedar tree. It was a sacred tree (*shinboku*), she told him, which he could cut down to build Rokkaku-dô.[13] A similar tale appears in the *Iizumi Shôfuku-ji engi* (*BR*-5). After the empress Kôken's death, the famous priest Dôkyô was exiled to Shimotsuke province. He took along a statue of the eleven-headed Kannon that had originally been made in India by the god Bishukatsumaten (Viśvakarman), and had been brought from T'ang China to Japan by the monk Ganjin. It was initially presented to the empress Kôken, who enshrined it in her palace.[14] The exiled Dôkyô passed through the distant stations of the Tôkai searching for a "*yuen no reichi*" for the statue:

> He reached here, Sagami province, Ashigara district, Chiyo village, when suddenly the Kannon in the pilgrimage pannier (*oibotoke*) became heavy. It seemed as if it were pushing him down, and he could not move one step further. Dôkyô thought it was strange and wondered, "Is this the *yuen no reichi* for the statue?" He sincerely prayed, "Namu Daiji Kanzeon, if you have some *innen* with this place take pity on this being's doubts and confer some precious sign."

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[13] Ibid., 127.

[14] Dôkyô had acquired shamanistic healing powers by undergoing ascetic practices at Mount Katsuragi, first opened by the *hijiri*, En no Ozune. During the reign of empress Kôken, he was involved in political intrigues, and was eventually appointed "king of the law." His plans to usurp the throne were foiled, however, and he died in exile in Shimotsuke province in 772. See Joseph M. Kitagawa, *Religion in Japanese History* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1966), 44.

> Thereupon, the statue which had been set down on a small table flew into the branches of a tree along the road and, perched there, emitting light.[15]

The tale goes on to say that afterward local villagers helped to make a grass hut to enshrine the deity.[16] In both Prince Shôtoku's and Dôkyô's cases, therefore, the journey ends with the holy man's unexpected stop at a numinous site that is karmically connected with Kannon (*yuen no reichi*). Coming in contact with this place means they must build a temple for the Kannon icon. This denouement, of course, is precisely the reason for why the story is told.

Tales of preternatural immobility have a long history in the Buddhist tradition. In Central Asia and China, for example, Hsüang-tsang tells about a Buddha image in the town of Po-chia-i west of Khotan. The statue had been brought from Kashmir by a Central Asian king: "He brought it home in all reverence with his army; when the image reached this spot, it could not be moved any farther, so a monastery was erected around it."[17] Art historian Alexander Soper argues that these miracle

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[15] Ryôsei, *Bandô reijôki*, 237-38.

[16] Other stories of preternatural immobility include the *Kegon-ji engi* (*SR*-33), the *Iwadono Anrakuji engi* (*BR*-11), the *Ishiyamadera engi* (*SR*-13), and the *Hasedera engi* (*SR*-8). In the *Ishiyamadera engi*, we have an example of a rock seat for the statue. Rôben found the rock dais (described elsewhere as an eight petaled Lotus) for his Kannon statue when he saw the *kami*, the old man Hira Myôjin, sitting on it. The statue would not budge after he set it upon the rock. See Kôyô and Tsujimoto, *Saikoku reijôki*, 88-89.

[17] Alexander C. Soper, *Literary Evidence for Early Buddhist Art in China* (Artibus Asiae Supplementum 19), Ascona, Switzerland: Artibus Asiae Publishers, 1959, 247. *The Kao Seng Chuan* tells the story that, "in the [326-334] era of the Chin, the Prefect of T'an-yang, Kao Li, had a gilded image dug out of the bay near the Chang-hou Bridge. It lacked aureole and pedestal, but was fashioned with the greatest skill. ... Li carried the image back to the Ch'ang-kan landing; but there his oxen refused to go farther, in spite of all that human strength could do. In the end he gave in, and went straight to Ch'ang-kan-ssu [with it]" (9). A later entry from the same source states that in 394, "all at once an image appeared north of the city, its radiant body-signs shining skyward. The brethren of Pai-ma-ssu happened to be the first to go out to welcome it, but they were unable to set it in motion. [Tan]-i then went to adore it, saying to his followers: "This must be a royal Asokan statue, vouchsafed to our Ch'ang-sha-ssu!"

stories of "preternatural immobility" are the clearest examples of a motif that is rooted in the Indian Buddhist tradition:

> The statue that could not be moved at the wrong time, or in the wrong direction, or by the wrong people, must have had its prototype in the body of Śākyamuni himself. Several relatively early sutra accounts of the ceremonies that followed the Buddha's *parinirvana* agree that until the divinely established conditions were properly met, it was impossible for the mourners of Kusinagara to stir his coffin. in addition, the Chinese learned from Fa-hsien's travel record that the Buddha's alms-bowl had once been immobilized in an even more dramatic fashion, at the Gandharan capital, Purusapura. A Kushan monarch, arriving as a conquerer, had tried to carry it home with him. First one elephant and then eight proved totally unable to move the holy object; and the monarch realized with deep sorrow that "he had as yet no karma-relationship with the bowl."[18]

However, there is also another possible source for these tales than the immovable body of the Buddha after his *parinirvana*. The Rokkaku-dô and Iizumi Shôfuku-ji stories also resemble Japanese folk tales of the *kami*, such as can be found in the early Japanese gazetteers and chronicle literature. As Yamaori Tetsuo and others have noted, *kami* wander (*yukô, shinkô*) until they find a support (*yorishiro*) that allows them to be (or sit, *za, imasu*) at a fixed spot. The "god seats" on which they rest in these tales are usually a stone or group of stones (known as *iwasaka*); a tree, pillar or flower often marked by a sacred rope (*himorogi*). By manifesting their spiritual presence at these seats, the *kami* were venerated as local deities who ensured fertility (*ubusuna kami*) or tutelary guardians (*chinjû no kami*).[19]

He directed three of his disciples to pick it up, and it rose as if buoyed on air. It was taken back to his temple, where clerics and laity hastened [to see it] until the rumbling of carriages and horses was everywhere"(23).

[18] Ibid., 245.

[19] Yamaori Tetsuo, *Kami to hotoke* (Tokyo: Kodansha, 1983), 25-26. See also Allan Grapard, "Flying Mountains and Walkers of Emptiness: Toward a Definition of Sacred Space in Japanese Religions," *History of Religions* 20 (1982), 197. On the descent of the mountain deity to occupy the village shrine as an *ujigami*, see Ichirô Hori, *Folk Religion in Japan*, eds. Joseph M. Kitagawa and Alan L. Miller (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1968), 153-4.

In the *Hitachi fudoki*, for example, a mountain *kami* Tachihayawo no mikoto descended from heaven to sit (*za*) on a pine tree in Matsuzaha. The villagers were unaware of his presence until they were afflicted with curses (*sui, tatari*) when they used the place as a toilet. Eventually, they propitiated the deity, and enshrined him in a sacred area high in the mountains, where he guarded the source of the streams that water their fields. To this day, birds fly by the mountain quickly and never pass over the top.[20] Similarly, Kannon statues enshrined at Rokkaku-dô, Iizumi Shôfuku-ji, and other sites set themselves on trees and rocks, becoming permanent fixtures of the place. As a further indication of their localized character, the statues are often known by their place names, such as the Hasedera Kannon, Kiyomizu Kannon, and so on, just like a *chinjû no kami*.[21] In other words, Kannon as a Buddhist divinity does not remain an abstraction, but is understood as a permanent spiritual resident at the temples.

Since the road accents the transient nature of reality or *mujô*, conventional images of stability, such as temples, houses, palaces and so on often take on a negative value in Buddhist literature, as we saw

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[20] See Akimoto Kichirô, ed., *Fudoki, Nihon koten bungaku taikei*, vol. 2 (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1974), 85-87. Murayama Shûichi argues that this is also the case of the *iwasaka*-like rock dais of Ishiyama and Hasedera that become, in effect, the god seats of the Kannon statues that the holy men enshrine there. See his *Chûsei Nihonjin no shûkyô to seikatsu* (Tokyo: Mokkoku Shoten, 1948), 26-46. Another example of an early *jinja engi* is the mid-Heian *Ichininomiya engi* of Wakasa province. In this story, in 715, during the reign of empress Genshô (680-748), the deity Ichinomiya Wakasahiko Daimyôjin appeared on a white rock at the source of the divine stream in the county of Onyu. Later, at the place the deity chose for a shrine, a thousand trees miraculously grew in one night, enough to use as raw materials for the construction of the shrine. After the shrine was built, the *kami*, Ninomiya Wakasahime Daimyôjin appeared on the same rock. See Hagiwara Tatsuo, "Shingi shisô no tenkai to jinja engi," in *Jisha engi*, ed. Miyata Noboru, Hagiwara Tatsuo, and Sakurai Tokutarô, *Nihon shisô taikei*, vol. 20 (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1975), 479-80.

[21] In the *Nihonshoki*, the *Fudoki*, and the *Engishiki*, many examples of *kami* named after a locality can be found, such as the deity of Kii province (*Kii no kuni ni imasu kami*), the deity who resides in Kumano (*Kumano ni imasu kami*), and so on. See Yamaori, *Kami to hotoke*, 24-34.

in the *Hôjô-ki*. The most important Buddhist scriptural source for this is found in the parable of the burning house in the *Lotus Sutra*:

> [The Buddha] creates the old and rotten burning house of the three worlds and, in order to save the beings from the fires of birth, old age, sickness, death, worry, grief, woe, agony, folly, delusion, blindness, obscurity, and the three poisons, he teaches and converts them, enabling them to attain *anuttarasaṃ yaksambodhi*. He sees blindness, obscurity, and the three poisons, he teaches and converts that the beings are scorched by birth, old age, sickness, death, care, grief, woe, and anguish. ... It is in the midst of such various woes as these that the beings are plunged, yet they cavort in joy, unaware, unknowing, unalarmed, unafraid, neither experiencing disgust, nor seeking release. In this burning house of the three worlds they run about hither and yon, and, though they encounter great woes, they are not concerned.[22]

Nothing is safe from the flames of *samsara*. As we have seen, the *Hôjô-ki* alludes to this parable when Chômei describes the fires that destroy the palaces in the capital during the great Heian-kyô fire of 1177. His response to the uncertainties of *mujô* is to live in a mobile hut that can quickly disassembled and transported in times of need. By contrast, the tales of Kannon ascetics and their *reijô* display a different response to the vagaries of *samsara*.

Interestingly, we find Kannon spirituality's locative faith in a second group of stories that deal with the preternatural mobility of Kannon statues. When temples catch fire, the enshrined Kannon statues are never destroyed. Instead, they miraculously escape the burning building by magical flight. What is important to note here, however, is that they do not fly away. They land on trees within the temple precincts, safe from the conflagration. An early example of this is found in the Muromachi period *Kiyomizudera engi*. After a dispute over the hanging of funeral tablets at an imperial memorial service in 1165, monks from Enryaku-ji temple on Mount Hiei attacked Kiyomizu temple. The defense of Kiyomizu did not go well:

> When, before long, the flames and smoke covered the main hall (*hondô*), a certain old monk entered the rear door, and removed the nails [securing the *zushi*?]. Just when he was about to take the main image out, the treasure curtains at the front

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[22] Hurvitz, *Scripture of the Lotus Blossom*, 61.

opened by themselves, and a great golden light burned brightly. He was dazed and could see nothing, even though he tried. And then, the brilliant light jumped out, flying about five *chô* to a high spot in the west, among some fallen old pine trees. It rested in plain view on the trees. They eventually mended the brocade curtain, covered the statue again, and lodged it within a temporary hall.[23]

While the Kannon statue flew from the temple, it was only a temporary evacuation. After it landed on a nearby pine tree, it allowed itself to be re-enshrined in a new hall at Kiyomizu. It stayed where it had always been. In this case, the statue was autochthonous; according to the temple's *engi*, it was carved from willow log from the mountain. The mysterious ascetic Gyôei Koji, who had waited three hundred years at the holy spot, gave the log to the monk Enchin who found Kiyomizu after he followed a golden colored stream to its source on the grounds.[24]

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[23] *Kiyomizudera kana engi, Zoku Gunsho ruijû* (Tokyo: Zoku Gunsho Ruijû Kanseikai, 1959), 26b:30; *Kiyomizudera engi, Kokubun Tôhô Bukkyô sôsho* (Tokyo: Tôhô shoin, 1926), 6:61-62. This text is corrupt in many places, including this section. The story also appears in the *Heike monogatari* in book one, chapter six, "Dispute Over Hanging the Funeral Tablets." See Hiroshi Kitagawa and Bruce T. Tuschida, trans., *The Tale of the Heike*, 2 vols (Tokyo: University of Tokyo Press, 1975), 1:37-39. This tale does not appear in the *Saikoku reijôki* version of the *engi*. See Kôyô and Tsujimoto, *Saikoku reijôki*, 105-118.

[24] Examples of preternatural mobility can also be found in earlier Chinese Buddhist tales. In another entry from the *Kao Seng Chuan*, "In [616] the miraculous image sweated several times, that being the year when Chu Ts'an was ravaging the provinces. When he reached the metropolis of Ching he camped in the temple grounds. The great hall was so lofty that it overlooked the north city wall, and his bandits clambered up on top of it to shoot into the city. The defenders suffered so much from this that they set fire [to the building] that night with burning arrows. Clerics and laity within the city were greatly distressed [at the prospect of] losing the miraculous image; but that very night it crossed over the city wall, unbeknownst to anyone, and made its way to Paokuang-ssu; where it [was discovered] standing outside the gate, on the morrow, to the joy of the whole city. After the bandits had been dispersed, when the old emplacement of the image was examined, it was found that it had neither burned nor even been touched by ashes. The hall is being rebuilt at the present time, though not at its former scale" (Soper, *Literary Evidence*, 27). For an early Japanese example, see tale 2:37 of the *Nihon ryôiki*.

Other similar examples can be found in the later collections of Saikoku and Bandô Kannon temple tales.[25] However, two exceptions should be noted. In the *Shôkoku engi* (*BR*-8), the temple's Kannon image, after it flew out of the fire and landed on a tree, then flew south to another place that was karmically connected to Kannon (*yuen no chi*), where the priest Riken built a new temple for it. Why, in this case, does the statue move off the temple's sacred precincts? The answer lies in a southerly direction of the statue's magical flight. Kannon's scripturally acclaimed permanent abode is on Fudaraku, a sacred mountain located on an island off the southern coast of India.[26] The second exception is found in the *Mount Iwadono Anraku-ji engi* (*BR*-11). According to the old records, once, during a fire, the temple's main image escaped from the flames by flying back to the cave in which it was originally enshrined. The cave is now called "*oku no in*" (the inner sanctum). Here, the statue simply returned to the original place that it was enshrined in at the site.[27]

What is the point of these tales of preternatural mobility? Besides revealing the miraculous powers of the main image, the tales show that, despite the fires that periodically destroy the temples, Kannon statues escape destruction. Not only do they remain unscathed by the fires of *samsara*, but they stay put at the temples in which they are enshrined.

What Causes Stability?

What makes Kannon statues remain at their temples rather than flying away to other locales? One reason is that the sites have an inherent sacredness that makes them magnetic, attracting the statues to remain on the spot. Kannon temples are often located at *kami* cult sites on mountains, ponds, lakes, falls, groves, and caves. Mountains were

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[25] See, for example, the *Sugimotodera engi* (*BR*-1) and the *Mount Kinryû Sensô-ji engi* (*BR*-13).

[26] Ryôsei, *Bandô reijôki*, 249.

[27] Ibid., 265.

long considered to be *shintaizan* or abodes of the *kami* and therefore were natural sites for a Buddhist celestial divinity like Kannon.[28]

The origin legends of these temples sometimes suggest that the sites were previously abodes of the *kami*. As Katata Osamu, Yamaori Tetsuo, and Murayama Shûichi have noted, the *kami* of these sites often appear in the Buddhist tales disguised as either old men (*okina*) or women (*rôba*).[29] For example, in the *Rokkaku-dô engi*, the wandering prince-ascetic Shôtoku Taishi found a *kami* tree (*shinboku*) to build the temple only after a mysterious old woman showed it to him. In the *Yoshimine-dera engi* (*SR*-20), which we will discuss in greater detail below, an old man visited Gensan in his retreat on Mount Yoshimine, and asked him to find a *reibutsu* for the place. After he told him about a *kami* tree to make the statue, the old man changed into a white *nusa*, and flew to the top of the mountain.[30] Stories such as these show how that the local god assists the holy man in installing the Buddhist Kannon image at what was hitherto a *kami* site.

A second reason that is often given is that the site has a unique karmic connection (*yuen*) to Buddhism. It is a special place that was originally a sacred place of Buddhism in the remote past. Since Japan is a country that was far away from the center of the Buddha's historical propagation of the Dharma in India, it was impossible to claim a

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[28] Hori, *Folk Religion*, 202-5. In the *Saikoku reijôki* and *Bandô reijôki*, famous mountain temples on the routes are Ishiyamadera (*SR*-13) (Mount Sekkô), Hasedera (*SR*-8) (Mount Toyoyama), Engyô-ji (*SR*-27) (Mount Shosha), Chûzen-ji (*BR*-18) (Mount Fudaraku), Kamakura Hasedera (*BR*-4) (Mount Kaiko), Shôbô-ji (*BR*-10) (Mount Iwadono), and so on. Kannon is especially associated with water at sites such as Seigento-ji (Nachi-san, *SR*-1), and Mimurodo-ji (*SR*-10) (where the statues emerges from a falls and pond respectively), Hasedera (*SR*-8) (drifts from lake Biwa), Kamakura Hasedera (*BR*-4) (drifts in from the ocean); in groves, such as at Rokkaku-dô (*SR*-18), Shokoku-ji (*BR*-8), Jikô-ji (*BR*-9), Gumyô-ji (*BR*-14); and caves, such as at Ganden-ji (*BR*-2), Anraku-ji (*BR*-11), and Mangan-ji (*BR*-17).

[29] Katata, "Jiin engi," 82 ff. See also Murayama, *Chûsei Nihonjin*, 2-53. The most complete study on *okina* and *kami* in general has been done by Yamaori Tetsuo, *Kami kara okina e* (Tokyo: Seidosha, 1984).

[30] Kôyô and Tsujimoto, *Saikoku reijôki*, 140. Other examples include the *Miidera engi* (*SR*-14), *Chômei-ji engi* (*SR*-31), and the *Kamakura Hasedera engi* (*BR*-4).

temple's importance as a place where the historical Buddha had given a sermon. However, this did not preclude stories that attempted to show the temple's association to earlier buddhas from previous kalpic periods.[31] Former buddhas had left their marks at Japanese temples. Evidence for this is the discovery of ancient Buddhist artifacts that were buried on the site. In the *Ishiyamadera engi*, for example, after installing his Kannon statue on the rock seat of the local divinity, Hira Myōjin, the monk Rōben leveled the ground for the temple precincts. At that time, he discovered a sacred bell (*hōtaku*) about 5 *shaku* in height that had been buried in the ground.[32] In the *Saikoku reijōki* version, all that is said further is that, after the discovery, Rōben realized that "certainly the place was a spiritual site (*reichi*), and built the temple hall."[33] Why he would conclude that the bell is evidence for the sanctity of the site is explained fully in the earlier (probably fourteenth century) version of the *Ishiyamadera engi*. This text states

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[31] Stories about the miraculous discovery of buried temples and their bells, statues, and other *sacra* from previous kalpic eras are found in Chinese temple traditions as well. In Tao-hsuan's *Tao-hsuan Lu-shih Kan-t'ung Lu*, for example, the story is told about the origin of the stone image of Prabhutaratna Buddha at Ch'eng-tu in I-chou [i.e. Szechwan]: "The statue had been carved long, long ago, in the age of Kasyapa Buddha, by a man who 'imitated all the distinguishing attributes of Prabhutaratna Buddha's body.' This was done at a now extinct monastery on the West Ear River, Hsi Erh Ho, called the Vulture Head or Vulture Mountain Temple, which may still be traced (the god claims) 'through its remaining column bases and a *stupa* that continually emits light.' The statue was admired by a man from Ch'eng-tu, who got permission to carry it back to his city by boat. Unfortunately, he happened to mortally offend a marine deity on the return passage; and the latter stamped so furiously on the boat that he sank it with the image and donor together. During the Chin dynasty — by which time what had once been a sea bottom had risen to become a mountain — the earth over the spot began to push upward, and finally burst open. When an excavation as undertaken, they found, at a depth of ten feet or so, a boat containing an image and some human bones. 'The skull, forearm, and shin bones were huge, several times [normal] human size; and so must have belonged to one of the inhabitants of Jambudvipa in the age of Kasyapa Buddha, when the life span was 20,000 years' " (Soper, *Literary Evidence*, 34-35).

[32] That is, it was approximately five feet in height.

[33] Kōyō and Tsujimoto, *Saikoku reijōki*, 88.

that the excavated temple bell proves unequivocally that the site was "truly a [hitherto] unknown ancient site of a temple precinct for the manifestation (*suijaku garan*) of an ancient Buddha."[34] As a site of a prehistoric Buddha, Ishiyama, therefore, is different from the ordinary space of the *rokudô*. No matter how much the world is in flux, the sacred sites of Buddhism persist unchanged throughout the aeons as abodes of the Buddha.[35]

However, the most important reason that Kannon temples are stable centers is because they are the bodhisattva's paradisiacal abode. That these places mark the entrance to the other world (*ano yô*) is claimed explicitly, for example, by King Yama in the preface of the *Saikoku reijôki.* He tells the monk Tokudô, the founder of the thirty-three temple Saikoku route, during his legendary "three day and three night" spirit journey to the underworld in the Yôrô era (717-24), that the Guze Kannon had "divided into the thirty-three bodies" which now abide at temples along the Saikoku (or "Western provinces") route. These thirty-three temples are Pure Lands (*Jôdo*), where Kannon appears to save, according to their conditions (*en*), sentient beings who live in the final age (*masse*). In some cases, the temples are considered locales on Kannon's island paradise of Mount Fudaraku. Examples of this

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[34] *Ishiyamadera engi, Zoku gunsho ruijû,* 28a:98.

[35] The Ishiyamadera stories give no explanation concerning the bell's sacred persistence over time. However, one can turn to another temple tradition recorded by Hsüan-tsang from the Buddhist temple at Nagarahara, near modern Jalalabad that is suggestive. This site was famous as the place where the Buddha, in a former existence, met Dipankara Buddha, who honored the future Buddha by spreading his deer-skin mantle and hair for him to walk upon. After he heard this story, Hsüan-tsang asked the old monk in charge how the place where this event happened could still be in existence: "Several cosmic cycles had passed since then, and it is well known that at the end of every cycle the whole universe is destroyed by fire. Even Mount Sumeru is completely burnt out. The verger was equal to the occasion. 'No doubt,' he said, 'when the universe was destroyed this holy site was also destroyed. But when the universe came into being again, the site reappeared in its old place. We all know that Mount Sumeru is still there; so why should this holy site not also be in its old place? Bear that in mind, and you won't be bothered with any further doubts' " (Arthur Waley, *The Real Tripitaka and Other Pieces* [London: George Allen and Unwin, 1952], 26).

are Seiganto-ji (*SR*-1),[36] Chûzen-ji (*BR*-10), Chikubushima (*SR*-30), Hoshinoya (*BR*-8), and Ishiyamadera.[37] In other cases, the temples are mandalized in different ways. They are represented variously as the Kannon-in in the *rengebu* of Shingon's *taizôkai mandara* (Shôbô-ji, in *BR*-10),[38] which is supposedly the abode of the *shichi* Kannon; the western Sukhâvatî paradise of Amida; the bejeweled palace of Kannon in Miroku's Tosotsuten (Jikô-ji *BR*-9); and the Spirit Vulture Peak of Śâkyamuni (Grdhrakuta) (Nakayamadera *SR*-24). Generally considered, however, Kannon temple sites are described as Pure Lands, drawing upon depictions from Buddhist scriptures, such as the *Larger Sukhâvatî-vyûha Sûtra*. Such scriptural descriptions of the Pure Land were popularized in Japan in the tenth century in the priest Genshin's discourse on the subject in his *Ôjôyôshu*.

In the Saikoku and Bandô tales, Kannon sites are easily recognizable as spiritual locales (*reijô*) by the various "auspicious signs" (*zuigen*) of the Pure Land that catch the itinerant ascetic's attention. Holy men, for example, are able to recognize spiritual locales by their "auspicious clouds" (*zuiun*). Peculiar clouds are a typical *zuigen* that distinguishes a site as qualitatively different from the unclean world of the six courses surrounding it. Depending on the tale, they can be five-colored clouds (*goshikiun*), miraculous clouds (*kiun*), or purple clouds (*shiun*), like those floating around Amida and his retinue, when they descend to the *nembutsu* reciter at death, as illustrated in the many extant *raigô* paintings of the medieval period. The five-colored clouds, in

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[36] For a detailed analysis of Fudaraku symbolism at Nachi, see Elizabeth ten Grotenhuis, *Japanese Mandalas: Representations of Sacred Geographies* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1999), 181-82.

[37] The temple's connection with Mount Fudaraku has a long history. See *Ishiyamadera engi, Zoku gunsho ruijû*, 28a:97. It is important to note, however, that, unlike other pilgrimage routes in Japan, the Kannon routes are not systematized as a whole into a mandalized framework according to their *engi*. A possible exception to this is found at Ishiyamadera, where there is a "Fudaraku-sen" hill near the main temple, with a route to Kannon's thirty-three incarnations (*keshin*) marked off.

[38] See ten Grotenhuis, *Japanese Mandalas*, Chapter Three, "The Womb World Mandala," 58-77.

particular, reflect the pristine colors of *Gokuraku Jôdo*, and are asso-
ciated particularly with the Senjû Kannon.[39] Examples of these clouds
abound in tales of *hijiri* ascetics who reach the site of a future Kan-
non temple. In the *Rokuharamitsu-ji engi* (*SR*-17), for example, when
the *nembutsu hijiri* Kûya saw a strange purple cloud hovering over
Sanjô Kushige, he quickly realized that, "it was really a good *reijô*,"
and built the temple, Gokuraku-ji or Paradise Temple on what was
now called Mount "Shiun" there.[40] In the *Rokkaku-dô engi*, Shôtoku
Taishi's "kami tree" was girt with purple clouds.[41] In the first scroll of
the *Ishiyamadera engi*, the eight-petaled lotus rock before Rôben was
bedecked with "auspicious clouds,"[42] and in the *Yoshimine-dera engi*,
the monk-founder, Gensan Shônin, a disciple of Genshin, realized that
the Yoshi peak was a *reijô* when he saw the purple clouds.[43]

Often the hut/temple area is scented, like Amida's *Jôdo*, where,
according to the *Larger Sukhâvatî-vyûha Sûtra*, Amida's Tree of
Awakening exudes a fragrance that if smelled will bring one to the
"serene acceptance of the Deepest Dharma."[44] In the *Izuru Mangani
engi* (*BR*-17), the valley of the future temple "emitted a strange
fragrance."[45] In the *Yoshimi Iwadono Anraku-ji engi* (*BR*-11), "within
the undergrowth, was a place that emitted a strange fragrance." This
was a hidden *reijô*.[46] In the *Katsuo-ji engi* (*SR*-23), Kaijô, the son
of emperor Kônin, was undergoing austerities on the peak when two
mysterious monks arrived and locked themselves in his hut. After a

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[39] *Bukkyôgo daijiten*, abridged ed. (1981), s.vv. *"Goshiki," "Shiun."*

[40] Kôyô and Tsujimoto, *Saikoku reijôki*, 122.

[41] Ibid., 128.

[42] *Ishiyamadera engi, Zoku gunsho ruijû*, 28a:97.

[43] Ibid., 139-40.

[44] Luis O. Gomez, trans., The *Larger Sukhâvatîvyûha Sutra*, in his *Land of Bliss:
The Paradise of the Buddha of Immeasurable Light* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii
Press, 1996), 180.

[45] Ryôsei, *Bandô reijôki*, 289.

[46] Ibid., 263.

month, Kaijô smelled a strange fragrance wafting from the building, and entered it, discovering a statue of Senjû Kannon.[47]

In the Pure Land, according to the *Sukhâvatî-vyûha Sutra*, one can also hear celestial music and the sound of its rivers, trees, and the birds resound with the voice of the Buddha. The Buddha tells Ananda in this sutra that "[i]n this realm there are ten thousand varieties of spontaneous music. Furthermore, these musical tones consist only of the sounds of the Dharma heard in a clear, soft, and exquisite symphony, which is the first and foremost among all the sounds in all world systems in the ten regions of the universe."[48] Often the descent of Amida and Kannon from the Pure Land to meet the faithful at death is accompanied by this ethereal music, which is played by celestial attendants. In the Kamakura period work, *The Hymn to the Twenty-five Bodhisattvas*, this celestial music is described in great detail: "the twanging of the strings of the lyre of Kongôzô resounds with the oneness of the Ten Worlds, the strumming of the lute of the Bodhisattva Kômyô-ô lightens the perplexity of oppressive non-knowledge: each of the instruments adds to the symphony of the Buddha's law."[49] Holy men usually hear this celestial music, not at the moment of death, but upon entering the site of their future hut. In the *Sugimotodera engi* (*BR*-1), the famous ascetic Gyôgi was wandering throughout the provinces spreading the *dharma* when he rested under a tree. During the night, he heard excellent music coming from the tree above. He looked up and saw a purple cloud with an eleven-headed Kannon accompanied by his forty-seven attendants.[50] In a note appended to the *Chûzen-ji engi* (*BR*-18), the compiler Ryôsei suggests that Chûzen-ji is a Pure Land because of the *rokuji* (six periods) bird inhabiting the

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[47] Kôyô and Tsujimoto, *Saikoku reijôki*, 158. This fragrant hut is a *gandhakuti* or perfumed chamber of the Buddha.

[48] Gomez, *The Land of Bliss*, 181.

[49] Jôji Okazaki, *Pure Land Buddhist Painting*, trans. Elizabeth Grotenhuis (Tokyo: Kodansha International, 1977), 115. This hymn, known as the *Nijûgobosatsu wasan*, is traditionally attributed to Genshin.

[50] Ryôsei, *Bandô reijôki*, 218.

mountain. This rare bird is similar to the various fowl mentioned in the *Larger Sukhâvatîvyûha Sûtra*, that sing about mercy and compassion during the six daily recitation periods for the *nembutsu*.[51]

The Pure Land also emanates a mystical light from the buddhas and bodhisattvas residing there. Amida Buddha, according to the *Larger Sukhâvatî-vyûha Sûtra*, is called "the Buddha of Measureless Light, the Buddha of Boundless Light, the Buddha of Unimpeded Light, the Buddha of Unopposed Light, the Buddha Monarch of Flaming Lights, the Buddha of Pure Light, . . . and the Buddha of the Light that Surpasses Sun and Moon."[52] According to the sutra, "[w]hen living beings come in contact with this light, the three kinds of defilements disappear in them. Their bodies and minds become supple and gentle. They become full of joy and enthusiasm and good thoughts arise in them."[53] Kannon is also described in the *Lotus Sutra*'s "Gateway to Everywhere" chapter as a "spotlessly pure ray of light."[54] In just the same way, holy men discover that the places where they build their huts emit mystical light. In the *Jikô-ji engi* (*BR*-9), when meditating on a mountain, Jikun Washô saw an "ascetic forest emitting light of lapis lazuli, and when a perfumed wind blew through the leaves and branches, there was a sound of the tinkling of jewels and magical incantations."[55] In the *Sugimotodera engi* (*BR*-1), the eleven-headed Kannon that Gyôgi saw at the top of a tree emitted a brilliant light. The local villagers called it the "night light tree" (*yakomoku*).[56] In the *Yoshiminedera engi*, Gensan carved a Senjû Kannon, which emitted a spectacular display of light that could be seen throughout the province. Like a beacon, it attracted pilgrims, including an imperial

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[51] Ibid., 295; cf. E.B. Cowell, Max Müller, Junichirô Takakusu, eds., *Buddhist Mahâyâna Texts*, New York: Dover, 1969, 61.

[52] Gomez, *Land of Bliss*, 177.

[53] Ibid., 177.

[54] Hurvitz, *Scripture of the Lotus Blossom*, 318.

[55] Ryôsei, *Bandô reijôki*, 253.

[56] Ibid., 218.

messenger who visited the site from the capital as the first patron.[57] The luminescence of the site, and particularly of the Kannon statues enshrined there, is found in almost every *engi*.

In the *Lotus Sûtra* and the *Larger Sukhâvatî-vyûha Sûtra*, the Pure Land is described as a land where there is "no Mount Sumeru, or any other mountains or land features of a world system down to the ring of Diamond Mountains."[58] It is a flat place, "level on every side, lovely, like the palm of a hand, with districts full of jewels and treasures of every kind."[59] In the *Avatamsaka Sutra* and the various pictorial representations of Mount Fudaraku as well, a "plateau" is shown on the summit.[60] This is where Kannon has his palatial temple and gardens. When holy men discover that a potential *reijô* is on a rough, steep terrain, something happens to transform it miraculously into a level area suitable for a temple compound (*garan*). In the *Yoshiminedera engi*, for example, Gensan meditated on a rocky crag until one night, a herd of wild boar and deer stamped on the ground until there was a level spot for his temple.[61]

In short, these and other auspicious signs (*zuigen*) mark the hermit's hut as a heterogeneous soteriological space, a Pure Land beyond the everyday spaces of the six courses.

Ascetics and Resting off the Rokudô

As entryways into the Pure Land, Kannon *reijô* allow those who enter a place of rest from the ceaseless ebb and flow of *mujô*. A major motif in Kannon *engi* is the ascetic's exit off the suffering filled road of

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[57] Kôyô and Tsujimoto, *Saikoku reijôki*, 138-45.

[58] Gomez, *Land of Bliss*, 176.

[59] Cowell, *Buddhist Mahayana Texts*, 36; Hurvitz, *Lotus*, 186.

[60] Thomas Cleary, trans., The *Flower Ornament Scripture: A Translation of the Avatamsaka Sutra*, 3 vols (Boston: Shambala Publications, 1984-87), 3:151. See also the fourteenth century "Mount Potolaka Mandala" owned by the Shôrinji Temple in Nara. A reproduction is found in Okazaki, *Pure Land Painting*, 77.

[61] Zenshô Shimizutani, *Kannon no fudasho to densetsu* (Tokyo: Rekishizusho Shuppan, 1976), 78; Patricia Frame Rugola, *Buddhist Art in Context: The Saikoku Kannon Pilgrimage Route* (Ph.D. Diss., Ohio State University, 1986), 148.

birth and death to the qualitatively different, sacred space of the *reijô*, where his wandering ends.

Most of the tales begin with the founding journey of a holy man and end with him as the first Kannon devotee worshiping at the site. For example, in the *Rokkaku-dô engi* (summarized above), Shôtoku Taishi rested from his journey in a cool forest grove. It is only after he refreshed himself in the nearby pond that he discovered that his statue will not move and that here was the place of a new Kannon *reijô*. In some cases, as in the *Kokawadera engi*, the ascetic's hut may look "temporary," as can be seen in the Kamakura period *emakimono* picture of it. However, the ascetic's hut is not a symbol of *mujô*. The hut is the initial structure to enshrine the deity[62] to be replaced, eventually, by larger temple halls.[63]

The clearest example of the hut as a sacred place of rest off the *rokudô* is seen in the *Yoshiminedera engi* (*SR*-20). The story is about Gensan Shônin, the famous scholar monk from Mount Hiei and disciple of Genshin, who founded Yoshimine temple in 1040.[64] Since no women were allowed on Mt. Hiei, Gensan had left his mother behind when he went to become a monk. They had only exchanged

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[62] In the case of the *Rokkaku-dô*, that structural permanence is emphasized in an interesting miracle story. The temple does move later. When the capital was being built around the temple, it lay right in the middle of a planned roadway. One night a horrible storm struck at the area. The next morning revealed that the temple, during the night, had moved itself out of the way of the construction (p. 128). If necessary, the temple can move itself with divine power.

[63] Sometimes a founder's hall (*kaisandô*) marks the site of the hut. The original *kaisandô* of Kiyomizudera, for example, was supposedly moved from the old capital of Nagaoka to Kiyomizudera to honor Gyôei the ascetic and the priest Enchin. The first patron, Saka no Ue Tamauramarô was responsible for this. See Kiyomizudera, *Kiyomizudera* (Kyoto: Benrido, n.d.). This is a contemporary color picture guide of the temple in English.

[64] The tale recorded in the *Saikoku reijôki* varies from the dates given by other sources. Sawa Ryûken has it founded in 1029. The temple's own pamphlet makes the same claim. See Sawa, *Saikoku junrei: sanjûsankasho Kannon meguri* (Tokyo: Shakaishisôsha, 1970), 192. See also Yoshiminedera, "Nishiyama Yoshiminedera" (Kyoto: Yoshiminedera Published Pamphlet, 1987).

letters. Then one day a letter came from her begging him to see her one last time before she passed away. He took off his priestly robes, dressed himself in an ordinary *haori*, and descended the mountain. Now calling himself by his childhood name, he went to his mother as a devoted son, and took care of her until she finally died. Then, he put on his Buddhist robes again, and performed her funeral service. On his return to Mount Hiei, "on the road," he reflected:

> "It's really a floating world (*ukiyo*) of impermanence (*mujô*). Up until now, for months I have received letters from my mother. Despite the fact that she corresponded with me then, from now on, that will no longer be. Oh, even my mother, where could she be among the six courses and four existences (*rokudô shisho*)? Now I'll never meet her again, and my fate will also be like this. It's hard to know what the future holds, even on the morrow. Now I am returning to Mount Hiei. Even if I am called a great chief prelate (*daisôjô*), what's it all for anyway! The only thing that's really important is the next life." He felt the impermanence of life keenly, and felt no inclination to return to Mount Hiei. He immediately built a thatched hut (*shiba no iori o musubu*), chanted only the *nembutsu*, and contemplated the world. One time when he was looking up at [Yoshimine] peak, he noticed the strange appearance of a purple cloud floating around it. When he climbed up to see, there was neither a buddha nor a hall. However, because of the auspicious sign (*zuigen*) of the purple clouds, he thought, "This, then, is a *reichi*," and he lived at that place.[65]

In Gensan's case, he found a permanent refuge from the *rokudô* at Yoshimine. It is an abode of Kannon where he could directly attain salvation. The ambiance of Kannon's place is emphasized in the didactic exegesis of Yoshiminedera's pilgrimage poem-prayer (*goeika*):

> *No o mo sugi/ yamaji ni mukau/ Ame no sora*
> *Yoshimine yorimo/ haruru yuudachi*
> Passing through the fields, I head toward the
> mountain path, underneath a rainy sky

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[65] Kôyô and Tsujimoto, *Saikoku reijôki*, 139-40. It is interesting to note that this version of the *engi* is completely different from that recorded by Shimizutani Zenshô in his *Kannon no fudasho to densetsu*. In this version, his mother, who suffered terribly during the birth, abandons him by the roadside, where he is found and reared by a monk (77-8). Many other examples of coming to rest can be cited, such as the *Katsuo-ji engi* (*SR*-23), the *Nakayamadera engi* (*SR*-24), and the *Jion-ji engi* (*BR*-12).

The evening shower clears
from the good peak (Yoshimine)[66]

Tsujimoto Kitei, the eighteenth century compiler/redactor of the
Saikoku reijôki, interprets this poem-prayer as a Buddhist allegory for
existence:

> Although "passing through the fields" is passing through the fields on the path
> to Yoshimine, that's not really what it means. As for us human beings — the
> place at the end of our lives when we move toward death is an empty road. It's an
> empty field where one knows neither east nor west. There are black mountains
> on this overgrown plain. This locale is called the mountain leading to the other
> world (*shide no yama*). It is a mountain five hundred *yojanas* in height. From
> behind you, bull- and horse-headed devils chase after you up this mountain. The
> mountain with its swords pierces your body. Of the people passing through this
> plain and mountain, those who are extremely good or extremely evil do not pass
> through. The fate of extremely good beings is to meet instantly with Amida,
> Kannon, Seishi, and the thirty-five bodhisattvas. They climb onto the lotus of
> Kannon, and instantly are taken to paradise (*gokuraku*). Furthermore, evil beings
> who have killed others and parents are instantly made to ride the fire wagons that
> the bull- and horse-headed-devils have brought there. They shove them head first
> into hell.[67]

The site of Gensan's mountain hut has a paradoxical symbolism
in this passage. It is on the dark road of death to the next life, *a
shide no yama*.[68] Doubtless this image partakes of the pre-Buddhist
image of the realm of death as a place like the "pass of Yomi" in the
Kojiki and the *Izumo fudoki*, a view that Steven Heine suggests "was
characterized by a sense of spatiality in seeing the land of death as a
spatial extension of this world that is accessible by crossing a boundary

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[66] Kôyô and Tsujimoto, *Saikoku reijôki*, 141.

[67] Ibid., 141.

[68] The notion of mountains as abodes of the dead has a long history in the Japanese
religious tradition. For a discussion of the *shide no yama*, see Hori, *Folk Religion*,
151-2. An example of a descent at death *(raigô)* of Amida and Kannon, without any
mention of the *shide no yama*, is given in Genshin's *Ôjôyôshû*, in Ishida Mizumaro,
ed., *Genshin, Nihon shisô taikei*, vol. 6 (1970), 53.

in an actual place."[69] But there is also an opposite image of Yoshimine here as the "Good Peak," girt as it is with its purple clouds that lies above the evening storm. Yoshimine's flat *garan* spatially symbolizes that escape from the steep, and dangerous mountain paths that all in *samsara* must pass through. It is a place of light above the darkness, a place of transcendence above the plain of life and death in which we normally move. It is a place where one can meet Amida, Kannon, and Seishi, and rest on Kannon's lotus, to be spirited off the path of death and rebirth, particularly in one of the lower hells. Here the mountain takes on "such divine qualities as eternity, power, or stability, as in the case of Mount Sumeru, representing the stability of the Buddha's body" which becomes immovable when the Enlightened One entered the deeper levels of meditation.[70]

It is also important to note that the sacred stability of the hut/temple's location reflects not only Buddhist cosmological and paradisiacal notions, but also reflects an essential trait of Kannon, a trait that marks the bodhisattva off from the suffering sentient beings traversing the six courses. In the poem-prayer of the *Tsubosaka engi*, for instance, the site of Hoon Shami is described as,

Iwa o tate/ mizu o tataete/ Tsubosaka no
Niwa no isago mo/ Jôdo naru ran.
Standing rocks, filled with water, Tsubosaka's
Sand garden is the Pure Land!

The didactic section explains that "'standing rock' means that nothing is so superior, harder, or as immovable as a rock. Even large trees and houses are moved by the wind. Kannon's vow is like a rock. It does not sway even a little. 'Filled with water' means Kannon's vow is deep. If so, then, the sand garden at Tsubosaka looks like the Pure Land."[71] Here the immovable rocks and still

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[69] Steven Heine, "From Rice Cultivation to Mind Cultivation: The Meaning of Impermanence in Japanese Religion," *History of Religions* 30 (1991), 397.

[70] Ichirô Hori, *Folk Religion*, 144. See also, *The Buddha-Karita of Asvaghosha*, in E.B. Cowell, *Buddhist Mahâyâna Texts*, 162.

[71] Kôyô and Tsujimoto, *Saikoku reijôki*, 48.

cool waters of Tsubosaka become a temple garden according to the Buddhist perspective. Moreover, this garden space — and I would argue any Kannon temple's space described in the tales — discloses the steadfastness and depth of Kannon's vow of compassion to save all beings. This eternal vow to free us from the terrors of the *rokudô* in the Final Age is what makes Kannon temples a pilgrim's goal according to the eighteen century Kannon temple tales.

It is significant that even Chômei, in his "Account of My Hut," finds himself abandoning his transient hut on occasion to take a "longer walk." On these occasions, he visits the temples where the itinerant ascetics Rôben and Daikoku had built their huts centuries earlier to enshrine their miraculous icons. Even Chômei gets off the sorrowful road of birth and death by stopping at "the temple of Kannon of the Thousand Arms" at Iwama and "the famous temple of Ishiyama by Lake Biwa," temples twelve and thirteen on the Saikoku route. It is these temple sites, which became the popular focus of Kannon Japanese Buddhist pilgrimage in Chômei's time, that continue to serve as stable centers of the bodhisattva's salvation from transmigration to the present day.

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BEGINNING OF RELIGION

INA WUNN

Summary

In the last two decades, the study of Palaeolithic religion has come to be of increasing concern to both scholars of the history of religion and archaeologists. In this paper the appropriateness of some recent views in the interpretation of the archaeological findings is re-evaluated. The conclusion of this study is that neither evidence of early ritual practises nor of belief in an afterlife can be endorsed. All relevant conceptions of that kind are either products of a certain mental climate at the time of the discovery of the fossils, or of ideologies. The results of palaeanthropological research prove that none of the early representatives of the genus *Homo* was capable of developing a complicated symbol system. Only in the middle Palaeolithic period *Homo neanderthalensis* had developed advanced intellectual abilities. But neither in connection with his hunting customs nor with his domestic activities can any traces of cult practice be found. Only the rare burials can be interpreted as a first sign of religious feelings. But there are no funeral rituals or funeral gifts. All assumptions that Neanderthal man already believed in an afterlife, are mere speculation. Theories of rituals during the lower and middle Palaeolithic belong to the realm of legend.

The search for the origin of religion was one of the main topics of discussion during the first half of the twentieth century. It was Johannes Maringer who interpreted the archaeological findings of stone-age cultures as a possible indication of early belief in supreme beings.[1] Whenever the question of prehistoric religion arises in recent publications, authors still refer to Johannes Maringer or one of his contemporaries[2] to emphasise their particular point of view.[3]

When Johannes Maringer initially set out to portray the belief system of prehistoric man, he was well aware that knowledge about

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[1] Maringer 1956.

[2] James 1957, Narr 1966: 298-320.

[3] See for example Verkamp 1995: 5, and Dickson 1990.

early hominids was hardly sufficient to attempt a reconstruction of
their religion.[4] Since then, however, a vast amount of literature dealing
with early religion or the origin of religion has been published.
Whereas Johannes Maringer carefully interpreted the findings and
criticised the documentation of the excavations, his successors are
convinced that religion came into being with the birth of the first
hominids several million years ago. Their theories are based upon
rare archaeological material, interpreted with the aid of ethnographic
analogues. The use of ethnographic analogues in prehistoric research
is, however, a source of heated debate. The archaeologist André
Leroi-Gourhan emphasises the difficulties encountered in tracing the
religion of a society of which only material remnants remain. It
is even more complicated to gain insight into the mentality of a
people whose culture is hardly documented and only scarcely known.[5]
On the other hand, scholars such as Peter Ucko and Lewis Binford
extensively discuss the value of ethnographic analogues to explain the
behaviour of early hunter-gatherer communities.[6] They have failed,
however, to develop a set of mutually agreed-upon research guidelines
and definitions that will clarify analytic approaches to the subject.[7]
Therefore scholars continue to use ethnographic analogies to explain
possible belief systems of early man without the necessary critical
distance. As a result, the presumed religion in Palaeolithic times
partly resembles the mentality of arctic peoples, and partly resembles
the belief of Australian aborigines, according to the experience and
research interests of the scholar.[8] The sparse archaeological material
itself hardly allows precise interpretation. Sometimes there are several
possible ways to explain the remains, sometimes nothing can be
said about the context of the archaeological findings. Despite the

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[4] See Maringer 1956: 298.

[5] Leroi-Gourhan 1981.

[6] Binford 1984, Ucko 1977.

[7] For a recently developed guideline, see Wunn 2000 (in press).

[8] Mircea Eliade, for example, is convinced that arctic shamanism was as much part
of the Palaeolithic belief system as the rites of pygmies; see Eliade 1978: 19.

controversial discussions among archaeologists, it seems to be an accepted fact in the field of History of Religion that Palaeolithic man had a specific religion.[9] They performed rituals related to hunting and believed in a master of animals. They buried the dead and acknowledged a life after death. On the other hand, due to traces of cannibalism, they are assumed to have been wild and primitive. Modern archaeologists and palaeanthropologists are more cautious in their interpretations. They describe only fossils and excavations and hardly ever venture to comment on the mentality of their object of research.[10]

1. Religion of *Australopithecus*, *Homo rudolfensis* and *Homo habilis*

While scholars such as Ioan Couliano or Marija Gimbutas assume that there is no actual proof of religious activity before 60 000 B.C.,[11] Mircea Eliade is convinced that even the first hominids had a certain spiritual awareness. For him it is essential that the upright posture of *Australopithecus* was the decisive step beyond the status of mere primates. Therefore this early genus of hominids is believed to have had a sense of consciousness which differs only slightly from that of modern humans. For Mircea Eliade it is proven that both *Australopithecus* and the first species of the genus *Homo* were successful hunters. He takes for granted that these early hominids were already familiar with rituals that are typical of recent hunter-gatherer communities.[12]

The commonly accepted starting point for prehistorical religion is believed to have been about 6 million years ago, when the common ancestor of modern apes and human beings lived somewhere in the African bush. The fossil remnants of this common ancestor, a true missing link in the evolution of man, has not been discovered until

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[9] See, for example, Gimbutas 1987: 505-515, Heyden 1987: 127-133, Ripinski-Naxon 1995: 43-54 and Otte 1995: 55-75.

[10] Henke and Rothe 1994.

[11] See Eliade and Couliano 1991: 27, and Gimbutas 1996: 3f.

[12] Eliade 1978: 15.

recently. However, the finding of a new African hominid species in 1994, considered to be at least 4.4 million years old, is closest to approaching the roots of the human phylogenetic tree. This new species was first identified as *Australopithecus ramidus*, but according to the latest anatomical studies it seems to belong to a different genus, *Ardipithecus*.[13] *Ardipithecus ramidus* is probably the ancestor of the so-called australopithecines, who lived in wooded environments of eastern and southern Africa.[14] During the following two million years, the australopithecines developed into several species, which disappeared in part after a comparatively short period. Only one species, most probably the *Australopithecus afarensis*, developed into the first member of the *Homo* lineage. Even the first members of the early genus *Homo* show considerable variability in size and shape, so that they now have been classified as three different species, *Homo habilis*, who is at the beginning of the phylogenetic tree of the genus *Homo*, *H. rudolfensis*, and finally *H. ergaster*, the ancestor of the modern human.[15]

As a result of the latest research in palaeoanthropology (morphology and anatomy) it is impossible to maintain that *Australopithecus* and the early representatives of the species *Homo* pursued the nutrition strategy of hunters. When Raymond Dart published his biological analysis of a childlike skull found in the area of Taung in 1925, he discovered certain anatomical features which made it necessary for him to classify the unknown species as a new biological taxon.[16] *Australopithecus africanus* DART 1925 held, in biological terms, an intermediate position between the well-known apes and the genus *Homo*. These anatomical features of the skull, and therefore the brain, are, however, not linked to intellectual abilities, meaning that the bipedalism of the younger *Australopithecus* could lead to a change of con-

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[13] Henke and Rothe 1999: 143ff.

[14] The phylogenetic tree of Austalopithecus and Ardipithecus is still a main topic of discussion among scientists. See Henke and Rothe 1999: 143ff.

[15] Strait et al. 1997: 17ff.; Henke and Rothe 1999: 177.

[16] See Henke and Rothe 1994: 248.

sciousness. First assumptions, that *Australopithecus* knew how to use fire, were based on a false interpretation of the facts. The blackish patches, which were originally interpreted as traces of fire, were attributable to manganic discoloration. The hypothesis that these early hominids mainly fed on meat, had to be revised. The fossil accumulations of bones found in certain places of the South African savannah were caused by lions and hyenas. From a palaeanthropological point of view it is impossible that the different species of *Australopithecus* with their low brain volume of 310 ccm up to 530 ccm were able to think in abstract terms. It is true that early hominids pursued the strategy of progressive brain development and therefore managed to occupy a new ecological niche as carrion-eaters. This strategy proved to be quite successful during the first steps of the evolution of man, but does not mean that *Australopithecus*, *Homo rudolfensis*, *Homo ergaster* and *Homo habilis* had necessarily better intellectual facilities than modern day chimpanzees.[17] From a different point of view, the archaeologist Stephen Mithen comes to the same conclusion: He pleads for a certain model of the mind's development during evolution, deduced from evolutionary and developmental psychology.[18] Hominids as well as young children seem to have intuitive knowledge in four fundamental behavioural domains. Content-rich mental modules provide young children, and probably our ancestors, with certain abilities, such as social intelligence,[19] intuitive biological knowledge,[20] technical intelligence,[21] and linguistic intelligence. Those domains of the mind determine the way a young child starts learning about language, other minds, and their natural and physical surroundings. During individual development and evolution the multiple, specialised intelligences start working together, so that knowledge and ideas can flow between the former modules.[22]

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[17] Grzimek 1972: 517, and Goodall 1990.

[18] Mithen 1996: 42ff.

[19] Whiten 1991.

[20] Atran 1990.

[21] Spelke 1991: 133-168.

[22] Mithen 1996: 64.

But the ancestor of *Australopithecus* and *Australopithecus* himself still had a primitive mind with only powerful general intelligence, a specialised domain of social intelligence and several minor mental modules comparable to the mind of recent apes and monkeys.[23] This means that *Australopithecus* was absolutely not capable of performing rites or developing any religious ideas.

A further crucial step in the direction of hominisation was the preparation and use of tools by the earliest representatives of the genus *Homo*, as Mircea Eliade emphasises. He is convinced that the very slow advancement of the first lithic cultures is not connected to a low intelligence.[24] Eliade takes for granted that early humans of the lower Palaeolithic made their living mainly by hunting. As a result those early hunters should have developed a reference system between hunter and killed animal, which first led to a kind of mythical solidarity between hunter and game and was the origin of religiosity.[25]

The hypothesis that early hominids already were successful hunters is attributable to Raymond Dart, who suddenly found himself at the centre of general critical interest due to his exciting discovery of a new species.[26] Since humans, according to Raymond Dart, are the only meat-eating primates, his biological conclusions regarding the classification of the skull of Taung would be supported by evidence of similar behaviour of this early hominid species.[27] Therefore, he looked specifically for fossil bone beds, which he interpreted to be the remnants of the prey of *Australopithecus*. In this context he also discovered densities close to the bone beds, which he thought to be traces of fire. Today it is known that those dense areas are merely manganese discolorations. Dart's thesis seemed to be confirmed by

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[23] Ibid. 94.

[24] Eliade 1978: 16.

[25] Eliade 1978: 16, 17.

[26] Many arguments against Dart's classification of the "Baby of Taung" are due to scepticism and envy. Henke and Rothe 1994: 248.

[27] Also the hypothesis of Joseph Campbell is based on Dart. See Campbell 1987: 359f.

Louis Leakey in the Tanzanian Olduvai Gorge, where the famous anthropologist found remnants of an early hominid, classified as *Zinjanthropus*, along with primitive stone tools. Although there were substantial doubts about Dart's thesis — how could a delicate creature weighing approximately 45 kg be able to kill the large ungulates of the African savannah? — Dart's point of view became generally popular and accepted in the sixties.[28] Only intensive research regarding the behaviour of carnivores and taphonomic and sedimentological processes made it clear that the fossil bone beds were the results of different forces in an ecological system seen as a whole.[29] The layers of the findings were by no means the result of the activities of only one species and certainly not of the weak and delicate *Australopithecus*. As a result of these investigations it is certain that the first humans, including *Homo habilis*, fed on fruit, vegetables and carrion and were not at all able to hunt.[30] On the contrary, the so-called "Baby of Taung" had itself become the prey of a predatory animal. The first stone tools, the so-called choppers, did not serve to kill the prey, but to crack nut-shells and split open the bones of ungulates killed by lions or hyenas, in order to obtain the precious marrow. That was the single part of the prey that was left for *Australopithecus* or *Homo habilis/rudolfensis/ergaster*.[31]

Neither *Australopithecus* nor *Homo habilis* nor *Homo ergaster* fits into the category of a hunter. The mythical solidarity between hunter and victim, claimed by Mircea Eliade for the humans of the lower Palaeolithic, results from false assumptions. Eliade assumes that intelligence, imagination, and the activity of the subconscious of the early hominids differed only slightly from the intellectual abilities of the modern *Homo sapiens*. The results of modern palaeoanthropology

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[28] Even in the late seventies and early eighties the archaeologist Glynn Isaac advanced a hypothesis concerning human evolution based on the assumption that early *Homo* consumed a large quantity of meat (Isaac 1978).

[29] See Binford 1984: 28-57, and Henke and Rothe 1994: 355f.

[30] Binford 1984: 57, and Schrenk 1997: 49 and 72.

[31] Henke and Rothe 1999: 187.

and evolutionary psychology indicate that the intellectual capability of those early forms of hominids is in no way comparable to that of recent *Homo sapiens*. As stone tools and remains of meals prove, the first member of the genus *Homo* had developed only a very small domain for technical intelligence and several tiny mental modules for interaction with the natural world, but had not yet full natural history intelligence.[32] The discrete domain of social intelligence, which the ancestor of early hominids had already acquired, developed during the first steps of human evolution into a more powerful and complex part of the mind. Probably even a primitive kind of linguistic intelligence had started to develop. As Steven Mithen emphasises, the intellectual capability of the *Homo habilis* group was already higher than that of *Australopithecus*, but nevertheless "little more than an elaborate version of the mind of the common ancestor."[33] Therefore *Australopithecus*, *Homo rudolfensis* and *Homo habilis/ergaster* were at the origin of a development that encouraged the growth of hominids by forcing them to occupy the niche of meat-eaters. They were competitively successful because they developed the intellectual facilities allowing them to use stone tools to serve their needs, but not to think in abstract terms.

Mircea Eliade also assumes that early hominids were able to hunt successfully. There is no archaeological evidence for this assumption. It is certain that both *Australopithecus* and early *Homo* occupied the niche of carrion-eaters. Eliade himself was absolutely convinced that even the first of the hominids had a kind of religion that resembled in one way or the other the religion of recent hunter-gatherer communities. He called upon his critics to present evidence on the non-religiosity of early hominids.[34] The palaeoanthropology and evolutionary psychology has since provided this evidence.

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[32] Mithen 1996: 104ff.

[33] Ibid. 112.

[34] Eliade 1978: 17.

2. *Religiosity of* Homo erectus *and his Contemporaries*

Homo erectus and his immediate descendants were the first hominids who succeeded in leaving the African continent and to settle almost everywhere in the Old World.[35] One of the oldest known European fossiles is a jaw of the genus *Homo*, discovered among the pebbles on the banks of the Neckar river at the village of Mauer near Heidelberg. This jaw of *Homo erectus heidelbergensis* is approximately 650 000 to 600 000 years old.[36] Geologically the find belongs to the period of Cromer. This is a period between two long-lasting ice-ages, the Günz- and the Mindel-periods, when a relatively warm climate enabled humans to occupy new habitats. Primitive stone tools from the Neuwieder Becken and the latest excavations at Burgos in Spain prove that the European continent was inhabited at least 800 000 years ago, or even earlier. Information on the life style of *Homo erectus* could only be gained from excavations at Bilzingsleben, where an early settlement of *Homo erectus* could be found. Geologically Bilzingsleben belongs to the Holstein period. This means that the findings at this place are not only 200 000 years younger than the jaw from Mauer, but completely independent of the first appearance of a specimen of *Homo erectus* as a result of an entire ice-age. This period led to a characteristic change of flora and fauna, which formed the landscape and ecosystem during the

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[35] The oldest human fossil of Europe was detected in 1994 in the Gran Dolina of Atapuerca in Spain. These early humans are about 780 000 years old. These hominids, named *Homo antecessor*, seem to differ significantly from the well known (Asian) *Homo erectus* and the African *Homo ergaster*, which means that the early hominids of Africa, Asia and Europe belong to different species. Several scientists emphasise the following phylogenetic tree: *Homo antecessor* developed from the African *Homo ergaster* and succeeded to settle in Europe. Here he became the ancestor of *Homo heidelbergensis*, who himself developed into the European *Homo neanderthalensis*. See Henke and Rothe 1999: 204-217.

[36] The remnants of four individuals of the species *Homo antecessor*, which were detected at the excavation site "La Gran Dolina" near Burgos, belong to the eldest members of the genus *Homo* in Europe. An isolated skull, found near Isneria, Italy, is nearly as old. Early tools from France have an age of between one million and two million years and prove that Europe was inhabited very early.

first conquest of Europe by a hominid. The distance in time between the findings of Mauer and Bilzingsleben is reflected in the development of the culture. While the tools of *Homo erectus heidelbergensis* were still simple handaxes, the *Homo erectus bilzingslebensis* was already capable of manufacturing developed weapons and tools. Theoretically, this made him capable of hunting for game.

Anatomically *H. erectus bilzingslebensis* was more developed than his predecessor. Therefore the way of life of *H. erectus heidelbergensis* must have been even simpler and less advanced.[37] The excavation of the settlement at Bilzingsleben provides insight into the way of life of the younger *Homo erectus*. The archaeological findings of early man prove the following facts: At Bilzingsleben a small group of early humans camped at the shore of a small lake in not more than two or three tents. Here they seemed to have occasionally hunted a beaver or other small animals. Their stone tools were suitable for hunting smaller prey, whereas no weapon was found which would have been effective enough to kill an elephant or a bison. The distribution of the elements of the fauna supports this point of view.[38] Additionally they may have fed on the corpses of dead animals which were probably found frequently along the shore of the lake. Surely elephant and rhino bones, which were found at the working sites and served as support or work material, originated from dead animals that were not killed by *H. erectus bilzingslebensis*. One could conclude that they also ate fish, eggs and vegetables, and that the food was most likely cooked. The people of Bilzingsleben were already aware of a certain code of social behaviour and it is also clear that there was some degree of emotional exchange between certain members of the group. There are no indications of any religious activities. The comparison of *Homo erectus bilzingslebensis* with recent hunter-gatherer communities is not convincing due to the following facts: The popular belief that *H. erectus* successfully hunted larger game, has been disproved. Many of the findings of fossil bone beds which were said to be due to

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[37] See Henke and Rothe 1994: 407f.

[38] Mania and Weber 1986: 20ff.

the hunting activities of the *H. erectus* are in the near vicinity of watering places. Here the ungulates frequently became the prey of predatory animals. Analysis of the individual age of the bones of fossil mammals at Bilzingsleben and other Palaeolithic settlements led to the conclusion that many of those animals died naturally.[39] The first evidence that at least the younger *Homo erectus* was capable of hunting larger prey came from Schöningen near Helmstedt, Germany, where a wooden spear about 1.5 meters long was found in a hunting camp inhabited about 400 000 years ago.[40] *Homo erectus* had a brain volume which was still quite small compared to the brain of recent *Homo sapiens*. Only the younger *H. erectus* is supposed to have been capable of verbal communication, as anatomical investigations have proven. Though there is no direct relationship between brain volume and intelligence, behaviour or certain abilities, scholars are convinced that *H. erectus* was quite primitive compared to *H. sapiens*, as the archaeological findings related to his culture have revealed.[41] The results of evolutionary psychology seem to prove the following facts: Obviously technical skills increased dramatically over those of *H. habilis*. Natural history intelligence and social intelligence were also well developed. On the other hand the technical conservatism of *Homo erectus* over a period of about one million years is striking. The only explanation for this contradictory evidence is to assume that the well developed multiple intelligences of the *H. erectus* were still committed to specific domains of behaviour, with very little interaction between them.[42] Thinking and communication in abstract terms, which are essential for religious awareness, probably developed quite late.

Though excavations like the camp of Bilzingsleben, Markleeberg, Kärlich or Bad Cannstadt and the results of archaeological psychology do not support the hypothesis that early man performed any religious rites, and though the discussion of palaeanthropological facts prove

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[39] Henke and Rothe 1994: 428.

[40] Thieme 1997: 807-810.

[41] See Henke and Rothe1994: 424.

[42] Mithen 1996: 115ff.

that *H. erectus* was not at all capable of performing complicated rit-
uals, it is still the opinion among scholars of the History of Religion
and several archaeologists that ritual cannibalism was common among
early human populations. Thus Alfred Rust writes: "Unique finds from
Asia prove that cannibalism was exercised in the whole world."[43] Al-
fred Rust refers to finds of *Homo erectus* in the caves of Zhoukoudian
which reveal many similarities to Bilzingsleben.[44] While Alfred Rust
is convinced that the presence of several "smashed" human skulls is
a clear sign of ritual cannibalism, Johannes Maringer presumes that
skulls and lower jaws are the remnants of the deceased which had been
kept and worshipped by their family. Similar customs are still evident
among members of primitive cultures in Africa or Asia.[45] The palaean-
thropologists Winfried Henke and Hartmut Rothe express strong and
justified doubt about this assertion. The analysis of several craniums
of early man gave evidence that the destruction of the skulls was due
to the activities of ancient hyena and normal taphonomic processes.[46]
The archaeologist André Leroi-Gourhan had already noted in the six-
ties: "The conditions of the former excavations of Chou Kou Tien make
it difficult to even find a map of the site of skulls. The skulls were ex-
tracted from solid limestone and not even one of them is near to being
complete. After decomposing into tiny sections, they entered the gen-
eral category of the animal remains. It is difficult to understand how the
myth of head-collecting *Sinanthropus* could have assumed a definite
form."[47] Another victim of such prejudice is Karl Dietrich Adam with
his hypothesis that the skull of *Homo erectus steinheimensis* shows
traces of having been subjected to postmortal manipulations.[48] The
destruction of the base of the skull is his only criterion for the hy-
pothesis that stone-age man was frequently the victim of ritual prac-

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[43] Rust 1991: 175.

[44] Ibid. 178.

[45] Maringer 1956: 64-71.

[46] Rust 1991: 178f., and Henke and Rothe 1994: 428.

[47] Leroi-Gourhan 1981: 49.

[48] Adam 1991: 218.

tices. Between the death of the individual and the later recovery of the fossil, a number of taphonomic processes take place, which have significant effects on the later fossil. One of those effects is the modification of organic matter and its decay, the assortment or destruction of hard sections as well as sedimentological processes. André Leroi-Gourhan was able to show that the cranium and lower jaws are usually well preserved. Therefore it is only due to taphonomic processes that these individual body parts survive, and not at all due to human activities or postmortal manipulation.[49] In this connection it is necessary to emphasise that scholars can only come to a decision based on a series of complex investigations using a scanning electron microscope, as to whether scratches on fossil bones are due to violence caused by a stone tool or the teeth of a predatory animal. Since there are no archaeological findings for the entire Palaeolithic or Neolithic period to prove the opening of the skull by humans, none of the speculations about possible cult practice connected with human skulls is based on facts.[50]

3. Religion in the Middle Palaeolithic

From an anthropological point of view, the European middle Palaeolithic is characterised by *Homo neanderthalensis*.[51] This early form of *Homo sapiens* or descendant of *Homo heidelbergensis* lived over a pe-

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[49] Leroi-Gourhan 1981: 45, 55.

[50] Experiments with animal bones have shown that scratches made by stone tools are absolutely equal to scratches caused by sand. Those scratches occur frequently during the process of embedding. It is still difficult to distinguish between traces of human activities and traces of animal bites. An examination is only possible with the help of a scanning electron microscope. See Henke and Rothe 1994: 20-24.

[51] The so-called Neanderthal-problem is, however, a source of heated debate. Only ten years ago many palaeanthropologists were convinced that Neanderthal man belonged to our species *H. sapiens*. His characteristic features were supposed to be due to the extreme climate of the ice-age. In the meantime most scientists have been convinced that *Homo neanderthalensis* developed directly from *Homo heidelbergensis*, while the modern *Homo sapiens* developed during the same time in Africa and conquered Europe about 40 000 years ago. See Henke and Rothe 1994: 433ff., and Henke and Rothe 1999: 272f.

riod of nearly 100 000 years, during which the landscape, climate and living conditions changed dramatically. These environmental changes might have contributed to the special anatomical features of the Neanderthal man. Surely the need to adapt to a frequently changing habitat forced *H. neanderthalensis* to develop sociocultural abilities that were closely related to the progressive evolution of intelligence and psychological abilities.[52] The frequent environmental changes to which *H. neanderthalensis* had to adapt made life immensely challenging. In the warmer and humid periods of the Eem period, dense forests covered the landscape. Population migration was only possible in the valleys. The fauna consisted of elephant, deer, stag, aurochs, bear and others. Sufficient food-supply in the direct surroundings allows one to believe that Neanderthal man was relatively stationary during this climatic period. The excavated settlement of Weimar-Ehringsdorf was inhabited during this time. During the initial phase of cooler climate the flora changed. Fir and pine trees were common and formed large and humid forests. The winters were cold and snow was plentiful; even in summertime the temperature remained low. Not only non-migrating animals were hunted by Neanderthal man; herds of reindeer, wild horse, bison and mammoth provided sufficient opportunity for hunting. During the coldest periods the forests disappeared, and made room for

[52] Steven Mithen emphasises that natural history intelligence, technical intelligence, social and linguistic intelligence of Neanderthal man were all well developed, but there was still a lack of interaction between the four domains of the mind. Cognitive fluidity took place only between the domains of social and linguistic intelligence (Mithen 1996: 143 and 147ff.) The author of this article has a different opinion. In general the lithic culture of Neanderthal man is the Mousterian, which is still simple compared to the technology of the upper Palaeolithic. On the other hand the lithic cultures are not strictly related to the one or the other human species. *Homo neanderthalensis* too was found together with the more advanced tools of the upper Palaeolithic, while *Homo sapiens* was found with the simple tools of the Mousterian culture. Therefore direct connections between a certain human species and its lithic culture cannot be proved. The technical skills of the younger *H. neanderthalensis* and early *H. sapiens* obviously did not differ. That means that there is no palaeanthropological evidence for the assumption of fundamental difference between the minds of *H. neanderthalensis* and *H. sapiens* (Henke and Rothe 1999: 275, Reynolds 1990: 263ff).

prairies and tundra. The climate became dry with extremely cold winters and relatively mild, but short summers. The prairies were full of game which migrated with the seasons.[53]

The Magic of Hunting in the Middle Palaeolithic

The hunting activities of the Palaeolithic man, which Mircea Eliade and other scholars take for granted, are only able to be proved with reference to later periods of ice-age. At the town of Lehringen near Verden an der Aller the skeleton of an elephant had been preserved that had been killed with the aid of a wooden spear, found between the ribs of the animal. This is impressive evidence of the fact that *Homo neanderthalensis* was able to successfully hunt big game. Therefore it can be assumed that Mircea Eliade's precise conceptions of religion during prehistoric times may at least be correct with regard to the people of the Mousterian. He describes this religion as "magic-religious conceptions of Palaeolithic man" as follows.[54] The documents regarding the religion of the Palaeolithic man are obscure, he says, but available. Their meaning can be deciphered if the scholar succeeds in inserting these documents into a semantic system.[55] This semantic system is already given by the results of investigations of recent hunter-gatherer communities. Their similar lifestyle offers sufficient certainty for identical or very similar religions of recent hunter-gatherers and Palaeolithic man. Therefore *Homo neanderthalensis* believed that the animal is a being quite similar to man, but talented with supernatural forces. He was convinced that gods such as the "Master of the Animals" or "Supreme Being" existed. The kill of the animal took place after a complicated ritual. On the other hand rites must have existed, which were linked with a skull-cult and deposits of long bones. Similarly, Ioan Couliano argues that, "either similar models of well-known primitive peoples are referred to, or one dispenses with any model. The History of Religion can only use the first option, as imperfect as it may be. Scholars

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[53] See Henke and Rothe 1994: 525.

[54] Eliade 1978: 15ff.

[55] Ibid. 18.

have to endeavour to decipher the mental horizon of the people of pre-
historic times by using the results of ethnographic and archaeological
studies."[56] John Campbell concludes from the myths of known peoples
that there must be close connections between the religions of Palae-
olithic man and recent hunter-gatherers. The following conviction is
both precondition and result of his investigations: "I find that its main
result has been its confirmation of a thought I have long and faithfully
entertained: of the unity of the race of man, not only in its biology but
also in its spiritual history."[57] He proves his assumption with the help
of a comparison. Under the title "The Stage of Neanderthal Man" the
reader finds the detailed description of the life habits of the small and
delicate Negritos of the Andaman Islands in the Gulf of Bengal, but
Campbell fails to prove the connections between the habits of a people
of recent tropical Asia and an anatomically different prehistoric peo-
ple which lived in boreal climates 100 000 years ago.[58] Another argu-
ment of John Campbell's is founded on archaeological facts. The stone
blades of the Mousterian (the material culture of Neanderthal man is
mainly Mousterian) are still very similar, a wider range of different
tools was unknown at that time. This means, for Campbell, that the
custom of tool-making was carefully handed down from one genera-
tion to another, comparably to customs of recent bushman culture. This
extraordinary attention is due to a certain feeling of the holy, which
was connected with the manufacturing and use of the tool.[59] The pass-
ing on of Palaeolithic religion to religions of recent hunter-gatherer
communities serves as a proof that the myths of recent peoples origi-
nated in the Palaeolithic and have been handed down till today without
any changes. This means that Joseph Campbell constructed a typical
circular argument. Today's behaviours and myths are taken as proof,
in order to postulate the existence of the same behaviours and myths
as practised by Palaeolithic man. Then the postulate itself is taken as

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[56] Eliade and Couliano: 1991: 27.

[57] Campbell 1987: v.

[58] Ibid. 365ff.

[59] Ibid. 364f.

a voucher to prove the unchanged existence of those myths from the Palaeolithic up to now.

The opinion that Palaeolithic man already had a complicated religion, with certain notions of the holy and various rituals, can be found in nearly every religious reference work. Fritz Hartmann writes for example: "The magic of the hunt belongs to this typically human conception of the world."[60]

Even if the consequences drawn from the archaeologically secured facts in the past seem frequently exaggerated, several sentences in the volume of Johannes Maringer explain the intention of the authors. It was the common statement that prehistoric man was a mere beast without a developed mind that made the opponents of this point of view look for counter-arguments which are no longer defendable in the light of modern research results.[61] The use of ethnographic analogies to reconstruct prehistoric religion is based on a specific understanding of the evolution of religion. In the nineteenth century Charles Darwin's theory of biological evolution influenced nearly all branches of science. In the fields of the study of religion and anthropology, scholars like Edward Burnett Tylor or James George Frazer developed conceptions of religious evolution which have strongly determined research until today. Tylor as well as Frazer were convinced that they could prove an ascending development of religion from primitive origins to the modern religions of the industrial age. According to this theory the religions of recent hunter-gatherer communities can be classified as relics from ancient times.[62] This means, on the contrary, that it is possible to reconstruct the consciousness of ancient people with the help of knowledge about the religion of today's hunter-gatherer communities. However, only a brief insight into the multiplicity of so-called primitive religions reveals that their contents and symbols are not similar by any means. According to Max Raphael, the faith-conceptions of

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[60] Hartmann 1957: 403. Among the latest literature see, for example, Grim 1998: 1107-1108, and Hultkrantz 1998: 746-752.

[61] Maringer 1956: 59ff.

[62] Michaels (ed.) 1997: 41-60 and 77-89.

recent hunter-gatherer communities cannot be consulted in order to de-
rive from them a certain belief of prehistoric man. Even people living
on a relatively primitive economical level up to the present day, have
been affected by their past, which has influenced their state of mind.
As a result their ideas and religious conceptions changed in the same
manner as the belief system of modern communities did.[63] The an-
thropologist Wilhelm Emil Mühlmann acknowledges the arguments of
Max Raphael when he emphasises that all known primitive religions
are younger than theological religions.[64] Even if ecological and eco-
nomical prerequisites of different societies are the same, they do not
necessarily have the same or a similar belief system, identical rituals,
symbols and practices. Hermann Schulz emphasises: "Kulturell auf
das engste verwandte Gruppen können einen religiös-symbolisch und
artefaktreichen Ritualismus entwickeln (Sepik-Gebiet) oder innerhalb
der elaborierten ritualsymbolischen Medien tendentiell nichtreligiöse,
artefakt-arme Programme elaborieren (Kapauku)."[65]

The arguments show that it is by no means sufficient to find proof
for the hunting practices of Neanderthal man in order to imply any kind
of religion and especially not a definite and well-known religion.

Bear-cult

The existence of the cult of the bear in the middle Palaeolithic pe-
riod is taken for granted. Åke Hultkrantz writes: "Die Kulturen des ark-

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[63] Max Raphael writes: "Man hat diese Schwierigkeit umgehen wollen durch
Heranziehen von Aussagen sogenannter primitiver Kulturvölker. Diese nur in sehr
engen Grenzen mögliche Analogie übersieht, daß auch diese Stämme eine Geschichte
gehabt haben — eine regressive statt der progressiven der Kulturvölker. Es liegt ein
unberechtigtes Vorurteil in der Annahme der Einfrierung des Gewesenen; denn die
'Primitiven' finden sich, selbst wo sie auf dem Stadium der Jagdwirtschaft stehen
geblieben sind, mit den alten Werkzeugen und Waffen einer anderen Umgebung
gegenüber: die starken, den Einzelmenschen an Mächtigkeit überragenden Tiere sind
ersetzt durch wesentlich kleinere und schwächere" (Raphael 1978: 78).

[64] Mühlmann 1957: 1198.

[65] Schulz 1993: 189.

tischen Raumes sind Bruchstücke einer paläolithischen Jagdkultur."[66] Friedrich Heiler[67] refers to similar ideas as those expressed by Joseph Campbell, who describes the cult of the bear in an interesting, but hardly well-grounded manner. First Campbell refers to a bear-festival among the Ainu. After the killing of the captured bear and during the ceremonies, the skull of the animal is put at the top of a long stick.[68] In a second step Campbell portrays Neanderthal man in impressive terms: "... when the remains of a strangely brutish yet manlike skeleton were found in a limestone quarry not far from Düsseldorf, in the Valley of Neander."[69] The following descriptions shortly mention the caves of the Alps, where the remains of the bears were detected. The excavators had the impression that the arrangement of the fossil bones could hardly be due to nature, so they attributed this to the activities of *H. neanderthalensis*, who were assumed to have killed the animals and arranged their bones during certain ceremonies.[70] It is true that nearly everywhere in the Arctic primitive peoples know certain rituals connected with the hunting of the bear.[71] The excavators of the caves, Emil Bächler and Karl Hörmann, took these ceremonies of circumpolar peoples to prove their hypothesis of an ancient bear-cult in prehistoric times.[72] In the following years several discoveries of similar bear-caves seemed to support the hypothesis of cave bear worship. Emil Bächler himself discovered bear bone deposits at the Wildenmannlisloch in Switzerland and in Slovenia's Mornova Cave. In 1946 André Leroi-Gourhan excavated seven cave bear skulls arranged in a circle in Furtins Cave, Saône-et-Loire. In 1950 Kurt Ehrenberg secured

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[66] Hultkrantz 1998: 751.

[67] See Heiler 1979: 78.

[68] Campbell 1987: 334ff.

[69] Ibid. 339.

[70] Ibid. 341f.

[71] Edsman 1957: 841.

[72] Maringer 1956: 95ff.

a deposit of long bones arranged together with cave bear skulls in the Salzhofen Cave in the Austrian Alps.[73]

The latest find of supposed traces of prehistoric cave bear worship was published in 1996. In the Rumanian Bihor-Mountains Christian Lascu et al. discovered a cave rich in palaeontological cave bear deposits.[74] Scholars such as Johannes Maringer or Åke Hultkrantz refer to the reports of the excavators when they interpret the deposits as the remainder of cult practice. The historian Karl Narr also gives an account of the deposits of cave bear skulls and long bones, but remains sceptical.[75]

A detailed discussion of the finds of cave bear bones from a palaeontological and ethnographic point of view led to completely different results.[76] The careful and critical use of ethnographic analogues, on which the theories of a cave bear cult is founded in the end, leads to even contrary results. If *H. neanderthalensis* had known cave bear worship, its traces would have been found inside the settlements. The remains of such a cult would have been the bone deposits of Neanderthal man's favourite and most dangerous game, among which, however, the bear did not rank. Recent peoples, who know the bear cult, catch or kill a bear in his winter accommodation and bring it to their settlement. There it is killed and eaten by the villagers under different ritual regulations. The bones of the dead game are put into a holy place or are carefully buried near the village, but never brought back again to the dwelling of the bear.

The most impressive arguments against cave bear worship come nevertheless from the bone deposits itself: Crucial palaeontological objections are to be stated first of all. Both the cave bear (*Ursus spelaeus*), which was extinct at the end of the last ice age, and the brown bear (*Ursus arctos*), which spread all over Eurasia since the Eem period, show a strong preference for cave accommodation. There

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[73] See Lascu et al. 1996: 19-20, and Maringer 1956: 91-96.

[74] See Lascu et al. 1996.

[75] Narr 1957: 10.

[76] Wunn 1999a: 3-23.

they hide during wintertime and give birth to their young. The caves where the relics of alleged bear worship were found are the natural habitat of the animals, where they spend the long winters and hide their young. At those places the bears sometimes died for several reasons, for example age, illness, lack of food. Therefore their bone fossils are bound to be found in those places, if they were not carried off by carrion eaters or removed by sedimentological processes. The occurrence of cave bear bones in the caves of the ice age, which served generations of bear families as shelter, is just what a palaeontologist would expect.

The proponents of Palaeolithic bear worship did not only think the mere occurrence of bear bones in the caves to be remarkable, but also their alleged assortment and arrangement in which they were found. However, there first takes place an amassment of bear bones in certain places by the activities of the bears themselves, as André Leroi-Gourhan correctly noticed. The parts of skeletons of the deceased animals, which originally are in their anatomical order, are thrown in disorder or scattered by later generations of bears. Sometimes they are pressed to the walls, where they are relatively protected against further decay.[77] Also the outweighing of skulls and long bones is a result of a process of natural decay and not due to human activities. The mentioned parts of the skeleton are relatively heavy and compact, so that they are more able to resist decomposition processes than the small vertebrae, ribs, foot-bones or hand-bones. A result of those processes is the natural selection of the bone material.[78] But not only decomposition influences the state of the bones. During their history the caves were flooded several times, as the accumulated sediments prove. Such floodings do not remain without influence on the fossil material. With high water level and stronger current all loose material is either rinsed away or carried for a certain distance and then dropped at a place where there is a weaker current. During these processes the anatomical bone order is radically altered. Therefore

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[77] Leroi-Gourhan 1981: 39.

[78] Ziegler 1975: 44-45.

the accumulation of several skulls in one place and the absence of other bones is due to geological and sedimentological processes and not to human intervention. The floating ability of sediments can be reduced by prominent parts of the walls or unevenness of the floor, resulting in some bone parts being deposited in the proximity of obstacles. A concrete example of this effect is the discovery of several skulls deposited in a crosslike pattern in the Cold Cave of the Bihor Mountains. The obstacle, which reduced the transportability of the skulls crucially, was a stone, at which the fossil skulls were deposited.[79] Just as little as the assortment of the bone material is proof of human activities, so the adjustment of the fossils is an unnatural process. The movements of a transport medium, be it wind, sediment or water, are transferred to the material to be transported, so that the movement in a special direction leads to its assortment. Therefore the assortment of bear skulls is not due to human activities, but to the flowing water or other transport mediums in the caves. It cannot be said clearly enough: There was no cave bear worship in the middle Palaeolithic period at all. The bear caves show exactly what a palaeontologist would expect. Nothing suggests that the natural process of decay and sedimentation was at any time interrupted or disturbed.[80]

Combined burials of man and cave bear

In connection with assumed bear worship the opinion was held that sometimes men and bear were buried together in one grave.[81] As evidence served the excavations at Le Régourdou near Lascaux, where under a hill of debris both the remains of a bear and a Neanderthal man were preserved. The French archaeologist Fabienne May demonstrated that the remains of the bear bore no connection with the human

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[79] See Lascu et al. 1996: 30, plate 3.

[80] Wunn 1999a: 6ff.

[81] Rust 1986: 15.

skeleton, and questioned whether there was a funeral at Le Régourdou at all.[82]

Skull deposits and skull worship.

Just as the bear worship was regarded as irrefutable fact, there was hardly any doubt that Neanderthal man subjected the heads of the deceased to a special treatment and set them up for ritual purposes. Other scholars are convinced that Neanderthal man hunted fellow humans to kill and eat them.[83] It is said that the skulls of the killed later became the focal point of a ritual. This hypothesis is suggested by Ioan Couliano: "Einige Schädel sind in einer Weise verformt, die den Gedanken an ein Herauslösen des Gehirns nahelegen."[84] Alfred Rust expresses himself absolutely clearly: He is sure that the finds of isolated lower jaws and craniums are closely connected with religious customs.[85] Detailed and critically Johannes Maringer argues the question of the skull cult. He discusses the finds which were considered as proof of the presence of the alleged practices. There is, for example, the crushed childlike skull from Gibraltar or the finds of human remains at Weimar-Ehringsdorf and particularly the outstanding find of the skull of Monte Circeo, which is mentioned by every author as evidence of the described ritual practice. Finally he comes to the following result: "Das Fundbild der Guattari-Grotte spricht klar für einen Kult, in dessen Mittelpunkt der Schädel stand. Ursprünglich scheint er auf einem Stock aufgesteckt gewesen zu sein... Einem heiligen Bannkreis gleich umgab ihn der Kranz von Steinen. Der ganze Höhlenteil erweckt den Eindruck, als habe er den in der vorderen Höhle wohnenden Urmenschen als Heiligtum gedient";[86] and further, "Die Schädelsetzungen dürften aller Wahrscheinlichkeit nach eine Art Schädelkult darstellen, in dem das Gedächtnis der

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[82] Ibid. 15.

[83] Ullrich 1978: 293ff. See also the overview in Henke and Rothe 1999: 277.

[84] Eliade and Couliano 1991: 28.

[85] Rust 1991: 194.

[86] Maringer 1956: 80.

Verstorbenen gepflegt und ihre Hilfe wie auch ihr Schutz für die Sippe erfleht wurde."[87] Even André Leroi-Gourhan agrees that the skull of Monte Circeo is an intentional deposition of a skull, but he refuses to draw any conclusions concerning religious customs.[88] On the other hand he can prove that all other finds of isolated heads or jaws are the result of taphonomic processes.[89] After a careful re-examination of the original reports of the excavations, Fabienne May states that none of the descriptions of the excavations is sufficient to confirm or disprove the hypothesis of a ritual.[90] The discovery of a supposed cult site at Teshik-Tash in Uzbekistan, where the skull of a child was set up between several skulls of ibex, does not prove the hypothesis of a cult. In this case the remnants of ibexes and the skull of the child have no connection at all.[91] Since it could be shown that even the skull deposit of Monte Circeo was not the result of human activities, but that the damages of the skull were due to the work of hungry hyenas, the last argument in favour of a skull cult is disproved.[92]

Cannibalism

Cannibalism has already been mentioned in connection with the deposition of human skulls. André Leroi-Gourhan expresses himself as follows: "Die Existenz eines religiösen Kannibalismus im Paläolithikum mag wahrscheinlich sein, doch läßt sich dies bei der gegenwärtigen Materiallage absolut nicht beweisen. Und dennoch spricht kein Autor von der paläolithischen Religion, ohne für oder gegen die Kannibalismusthese Stellung zu beziehen, wobei in größerem Umfang auf ethnographische Beispiele zurückgegriffen wird."[93] But particularly those ethnographic analogies give strong arguments against the hypothesis of prehistoric cannibalism. The anthropologist

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[87] Ibid. 85.

[88] Leroi-Gourhan 1981: 53.

[89] Ibid. 54-56.

[90] May 1986: 17.

[91] Ibid. 33-34.

[92] Henke and Rothe 1994: 527.

[93] Leroi-Gourhan 1981: 56.

Gabriele Weiss and the archaeologist Heidi Peter-Röcher discuss the topic of cannibalism carefully.[94] They state that the ethnographic material itself is frequently not convincing, because it is based mainly on sensational reports of past adventurers. There are no assertions by eye-witnesses, but stories of man eaters were always reported by writers who only stated that they had heard about those customs. The custom of cannibalism itself was always stated to have been given up just several years before the arrival of the traveller.[95] Frequently the assumption that a certain people was guilty of cannibalism was used propagandistically in order to be able to lead a war against this people or to force them into slavery.[96] On the other hand it was a well known rumour in Africa even up to the beginning of this century that Europeans fed on the flesh of African children.[97] It is argued by Heidi Peter-Röcher that there is no evidence of cannibalism among recent peoples at all.[98] This means that it is nonsense to search for the reason and the origin of that custom in prehistoric times. It cannot be decided to what extent Sigmund Freud, with his hypothesis of the origin of human society, must be blamed for evoking the idea of early man-eaters. In his *Totem und Tabu* he made several statements about the origin of human society, claiming that at the beginning of prehistory a group of humans was ruled by a despotic patriarch, until he was killed and eaten by his sons.[99] The subtitle of his book, "Einige Übereinstimmungen im Seelenleben der Wilden und der Neurotiker,"[100] reflects, however, the

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[94] Weiss 1987: 142-159, and Peter-Röcher 1989.

[95] Volhard 1939: 369.

[96] Gabriele Weiss (1987: 152) mentions the example of a decree of Queen Isabella in 1503, who gave permission to enslave the Caribbean Indians because they were said to be man-eaters.

[97] Ibid. 150.

[98] Peter-Röcher 1998. On the contrary the American anthropologist Christy Turner is convinced that the Anasazi, an Indian people who lived in the southern parts of the United States during historical times, did human hunting. See Turner 1999.

[99] See Weiss 1987: 44-45.

[100] Weiss 1987: 44.

opinion of many of his contemporaries and colleagues, and contributes to the picture of the mentality of Neanderthal man until today.[101]

The facts on which the theory of prehistoric cannibalism are based are usually poor. Frequently it was sufficient to assume cannibalism existed, if a skeleton was found incomplete or not in anatomical order.[102] It is still considered a strong proof for cannibalism when split human bones occur, as were excavated at Krapina. The defenders of the cannibalism thesis argue that the remnants of human bones look absolutely similar to the scattered animal bones at the same excavation site. Therefore they come to the conclusion that Neanderthal man treated fellow humans in the same way as he treated game. This argument is still stressed by the anthropologists Tim White and Alban Defleur: Scattered bones of human beings and deer in the cave of Moula-Guercy show the same scratches.[103] This argument presupposes, however, that the humans as well as the animals were killed by Neanderthal man. Both the humans and the animals could, however, have been the victims of carnivores, for example hyena or cave lion, or the scratches on human and animal bones may be due to taphonomic processes.[104] This thesis would explain the remains of Krapina as well as the findings of Moula-Guercy. In any case, the identical treatment of human and animal bones and the missing of any traces of a ritual do not promote the hypothesis of a religious custom. In this case Krapina and Moula-Guercy would prove that Neanderthal man hunted other humans for meat. This seems, however, to be unlikely, because the hunters of the Mousterian lived in a habitat full of game, which was for sure easier to kill than humans.

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[101] Campbell 1987: 339.

[102] Maringer 1956: 81f. In the excavation report of the site Weimar-Ehringsdorf cannibalism is not mentioned at all. See Feustel 1989: 391-393.

[103] Defleur et al. 1999: 128-131.

[104] It is still more than difficult to decide whether scratches on bones are due to human activities, to carnivores or to taphonomic processes. The topic is still debated among scientists. For an overview, see Henke and Rothe 1994: 19-25.

The archaeologist Heidi Peter-Röcher scrutinised the theories of alleged cannibalism in early history. In this connection she discussed the finds of Krapina in detail. In her conclusion, she points out that the human fossils of Krapina do not stem from a group of humans killed during a single event, but stem from frequent usage of the cave over a period of 40 000 years. One of the main arguments in favour of the hypothesis of cannibalism was the bad condition of the bones. Since, however, the excavators operated with dynamite, the condition of the bones hardly allows any conclusions about the cause of death.[105] Scratches on the bones, supposed to be traces of stone tools, have not been examined with the help of a scanning electron microscope. Without such an examination the cause of the scratches cannot be detected at all. In the long run there is not a single point of reference which could prove the theory of ritual cannibalism in the Palaeolithic period.

Funerals and cult of the dead

An intended funeral is considered a clear indication of conceptions of a life after death.[106] Although the archaeologist Fabienne May remains sceptical — archaeology can probably prove the facts, but hardly find the intellectual background — funerals can at least serve as indications of possible religious conceptions, if not as proof.[107] Therefore reports of alleged funerals always cause attention, even if cautious archaeologists warn about overinterpreting badly documented

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[105] Peter-Röcher 1998: 41.

[106] Heiler 1979: 516, and Wißmann 1980: 730. Wißman explains: "In der Religionsgeschichte begegnet eine Vielzahl von zumindest teilweise religiös motivierten Verhaltens- und Vorstellungsformen, die — hier dem Begriff Bestattung zugeordnet — den Umgang der Lebenden mit dem Leichnam des Verstorbenen kennzeichnen und die darin implizit enthaltenen Vorstellungen oder explizit geäußerten Anschauungen, die dessen Existenzform im Tod oder jenseits des Todes, das Verhältnis des Toten zu den Lebenden oder dem Leben selbst betreffen."

[107] May 1986: 3.

excavations.[108] Ioan Couliano and Mircea Eliade are convinced that
Neanderthal man buried his dead.[109] Eliade not only takes the funerals
for granted, but believes that the position of several skeletons indicate
that Neanderthal man feared the return of the dead or hoped for
rebirth.[110] Both conceptions are well known in the history of religion.
Many funeral ceremonies among primitive cultures show that the kin
of the dead tried to prevent the return of the deceased. In doing so,
the corpse was bound or struck. Wholes were cut into the shoulders or
the belly and the sinews were destroyed. These precautionary actions
were supposed to prevent the dead body from rising and returning.[111]
Åke Ström and Haralds Biezais mention an example of the belief in
rebirth from historical times. They interpret funerals of the Germanic
people as follows: The corpse was buried in a manner resembling the
position of a child in its mother's uterus, so that the dead could be
reborn after a certain period.[112] Johannes Maringer is convinced of the
existence of funerals since the Mousterian, too. As proof he describes
the excavations at Kiik-Koba, the Mountain of Carmel and Teshik-
Tash. He also mentions places in Western Europe such as Le Moustier,
La Chapelle-aux-Saints and La Ferrassie.[113] The excavation reports
seem to prove that the hunter of the Mousterian already believed
in life after death. The young man of Le Moustier was buried, as
Johannes Maringer believes, in a sleep posture. "It is difficult to say
whether he understood this sleep as temporary and expected to wake

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[108] A comment of André Leroi-Gourhan: "So ist das Problem der Paläoanthropinen-
Gräber nur sehr unvollkommen erhellt; die Verantwortung trifft voll und ganz die
Ausgräber, die nicht dem Wunsch zu widerstehen vermochten, 'das Fossil ihres
Lebens' zu finden" (Leroi-Gourhan 1981: 67).

[109] Couliano specifies as follows: "Die unter dem Namen Neandertaler bekannte
Menschenrasse... glaubte zweifellos an eine Art von Überleben Ihrer Toten, die,
auf der rechten Seite liegend und den Kopf nach Osten gewandt, begraben wurden"
(Couliano 1991: 28).

[110] Eliade 1978: 20-22.

[111] Wißmann 1980: 733.

[112] Ström and Biezais 1975: 65.

[113] Maringer 1956: 71-76.

up in another world," Maringer explains.[114] The foetal position of the human skeletons found at La Ferrassie and Carmel is strong proof for the hypothesis that Neanderthal man bound his dead because he feared their return.[115] Traces of fire in those caves, which served as temporary shelter, he interprets as remnants of funeral customs. "Vielleicht hielt der Urmensch die Aschenschicht für eine Decke, die kein Toten zu durchdringen vermöge, die ihn also an sein Grab banne. Der Abwehrkraft des Feuers steht wiederum seine wohltuende, wärmende Wirkung gegenüber. Möglicherweise sollte das Feuer den erkalteten Leichnam erwärmen, ein Zug der Totenfürsorge."[116] In Johannes Maringer's opinion, the excavation reports do not prove the existence of funeral gifts. But the bones of ungulates, which were frequently found in close proximity of the tombs are, Maringer thinks, the traces of meals to honour the deceased.[117] All documents of the excavations which Johannes Maringer used to prove his opinion of funeral rites in the Palaeolithic period were recently examined by Fabienne May.[118] She comes to the following conclusions: Not all so called funerals deserve that name. Neither at Le Regourdou, nor La Qina, or Le Roc de Marsal did a single funeral take place. Many non-European excavations do not support the idea of Mousterian burials, for example places like Carmel or Teshik-Tash. At other places, e.g. La Chapelle-aux-Saints or outside Europe, in Shanidar, the circumstances at the excavation sites allow us to assume that intentional funerals took place. Nearly all graves contain only a single corpse, with the exception of La Ferrassie, where two children were buried together, and Qafzeh, where the skeletons of an adult and a child were found together. The grave of Shanidar could probably be a collective burial site as well. 14 corpses out of 34 alleged funerals were found in cavities or graves, all without additional installations. Fabienne May states that natural

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[114] Ibid. 76.

[115] Ibid. 77.

[116] Ibid. 77.

[117] Ibid. 77-78.

[118] May 1986: 11-35.

recesses could be selected consciously in order to accommodate the corpse, but that this hypothesis can not be verified.[119] All graves were found in the direct neighbourhood of settlements — that is the main reason they were detected at all. The remains of fire were found at some burial sites, but Fabienne May points out that those fires were lit by later generations in the caves and settlements, and have no connection with funeral rites by mourners or kin.[120] In the middle Palaeolithic, the dead were occasionally covered by slabs of stone. This can be proven in six cases.[121]

In connection with assumed funeral sites as for example Krapina or Kebara, the question arises whether Neanderthal man may have subjected his dead ones to a special treatment, i.e. whether they took off the flesh from the corpses and only buried the bones. There is first evidence for this custom in the Neolithic period.[122] In the case of the excavation site at Krapina the cause for this assumption is the bad condition of the bones. This, however, is more likely due to the activities of predatory animals. Later in the upper Palaeolithic, the other single reason to assume such funeral rites was the presence of ochre at the bones. Consequently the excavators came to the conclusion that the bones themselves must have been coloured. On the other hand an inquiry into the facts demonstrated that the bones quickly take on the ochre colouring if it is present in the direct environment, which was often the case in camp sites of Neanderthal man.[123] Traces of cremation are not found in the middle Palaeolithic. All skeletons whose position could be reconstructed with the help of the excavation reports were buried lying on their back or their side with bent, but not extremely bent, legs. This means that the

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[119] Ibid. 149.

[120] Ibid. 150.

[121] These are two burial sites at La Ferrassie, and the ones at Régourdou, Monte Circeo (which can no longer count as funeral), La Chapelle-aux-Saints and Qafzeh (ibid. 152).

[122] Peter-Röcher 1998: 41.

[123] May 1986: 162.

corpses were not bound before the burial. There was no evidence of funeral gifts. Fabienne May comes to the following conclusions: There is scarcely any evidence for intentional funerals in the Mousterian. Frequently the excavators preferred to interpret their archaeological findings instead of describing them carefully. Nevertheless it seems certain that Neanderthal man buried very few of his dead by putting them into a natural cavity or covering them with slabs. Ochre was not yet used in connection with funerals during the middle Palaeolithic period. Fireplaces in proximity of the grave bear no connection to the latter. Many caves were inhabited later, so that the traces of daily activities are frequently found on and near the graves. That means that knives and other items found there cannot be interpreted as funeral gifts.[124]

The only fact which remains of Johannes Maringer's extensive considerations is the mere existence of only few funerals during the Mousterian. It seems natural that Neanderthal man must have known feelings such as mourning, rage, despair and incredulity at the final loss of a beloved person. Obviously those feelings induced Neanderthal man from time to time to handle the corpse of the deceased in an affectionate way. This does not mean that he had to believe in a life after death or that he was capable of religious feelings. Especially the lack of any funeral rites proves the absence of a certain common belief. On the other hand those rare funerals can be a first hint of an initial feeling or hope that there might be a certain form of existence even after death.

Conclusion

For the whole lower and middle Palaeolithic there is no evidence of any religious practice. All such notions are either products of a certain mental climate at the time of the discovery of the fossils, or of ideologies. The results of palaeanthropological research show that neither *Homo habilis* nor *Homo erectus* were capable of developing a complicated symbol system. In the middle Palaeolithic, the time of *Homo ne-*

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[124] Ibid. 211-212.

anderthalensis, things were different. This early representative of the genus *Homo* had already developed advanced intellectual abilities. But neither in connection with his hunting customs nor at his settlements could any traces of cult practice be found. First signs of a beginning of religious belief in a form of existence after death are given by the rare burials. But there are no funeral rituals or funeral gifts. All assumptions that Neanderthal man already believed in an afterlife, are mere speculation. Theories of rituals during the middle Palaeolithic, of cannibalism or bear worship, belong to the realm of legend.

The question of the origin of religion is still unsolved. The origin and the development of religious feeling can be read from archaeological finds of burials. It is only in the middle Palaeolithic period that a first hesitation to abandon a beloved is provable. Proper funerals and possible funeral gifts can be made out during the upper Palaeolithic. Only the European Mesolithic and the early Neolithic of Asia Minor know regular funeral customs and rituals, a certain spectrum of funeral gifts and secondary burials.[125] An increasing care for the dead during the last 100 000 years is nevertheless easily to detect. It can be supposed that the developing funeral customs were closely connected to the belief in an afterlife. Obviously religion, which means the belief in a supreme being, in supernatural power, in an afterlife, the feeling of the "Holy" in the sense of Rudolf Otto, was not a part of human nature from the very beginning, as Mircea Eliade assumes, but had to develop over a period of thousands of years.[126]

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[125] See Wunn 1999b: 130ff.

[126] Otto 1963.

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BOOK REVIEWS

ANTOON GEELS, *Subud and the Javanese mystical tradition* (Nordic Institute of Asian Studies Monograph Series, 76) — Richmond: Curzon 1997 (262 p.) ISBN 0-7007-0623-2 (hc.) £30.00.

Subud, an acronym of *Susila Budhi Dharma*, means "to follow the will of God with help of the Divine Power that works both within and without, by way of surrendering oneself to the will of Almighty God" (p. 127). This mystical movement, which was founded by Radèn Mas Muhammad Subuh Sumohadiwidjojo (1901-1987), is one of many of its kind in Java, Indonesia. Together with similar groups, like Sumarah and Pangèstu, it is well-known and highly successful, attracting many people and spreading to about eighty countries.

Although Subud leaders deny any relation with Javanese mystical traditions, the greater part of Subud's conceptual apparatus, so the author claims, is nevertheless firmly rooted in them. Therefore the author first wants to analyse Subud's conceptual framework against its Javanese background. The historical study, however, is by far the weakest section of the book. The first part (p. 21-78) is a long-winded introduction, which is uninteresting for specialist readers. A phrase like "Indonesia was finally liberated from three and a half centuries of colonial rule" (p. 18; repeated on p. 84) could impossibly flow from the pen of a serious scholar. Not being a Javanist himself, the author is forced to draw heavily upon secondary literature by a few (Western) writers. Consequently, he can only echo the opinions of others and is unable to give critical assessments himself. Following De Jong, for example, the author adopts Pigeaud's historical division of Javanese literature (p. 22), including Pigeaud's so-called renaissance period. The idea of a literary "restoration" or "a new period of flowering" in the Surakarta period (after 1745) has indeed taken firm roots in older Javanese scholarship, but has long since been abandoned, even by Pigeaud himself. In his discussion of the *Serat Cabolèk*, Geels again simply summarizes the views of its editor, Soebardi (p. 49-54), apparently unaware that they are not generally accepted by all Javanists.

The second part, entitled "Mysticism in Post-War Java" (p. 81-179), is of a more interesting nature. The author discusses the life of Subud's founder,

its early history, basic concepts, spiritual exercises and membership. This descriptive segment is preceded by a brief chapter about the rise of mystical movements in Java (p. 81-92), and a presentation of three other mystical movements in contemporary Java, viz. Sumarah, Sapta Darma and Pangèstu (p. 93-112). In the initial chapter of the second part the author assumes that the number of mystical movements has increased dramatically in Java since independence in 1945. The reasons for this, however, are not given a full consideration; they certainly deserve more space than the mere ten pages which the author devoted to them. The immediate pre-independence years are furthermore neglected, whereas in my opinion the occult religious organizations in this period (such as the Theosophical Society, Freemasonry or the Muslim brotherhoods) might have inspired the blossoming of many mystical movements after the war of independence.

The final part of the book, which the author has simply given the title "Analysis," has the character of an appendix, containing an attempt at relating Subud theory and practice to 'the' Javanese mystical tradition (p. 183-195) and, finally, quite out of the blue, a psychological interpretation of Subud's spiritual exercises (p. 196-205). In this last chapter the author, who is in fact a specialist in the field of the psychological study of mysticism, at last turns to a subject with which he is best at home.

In sum, this book is interesting as a case study of one particular mystical movement in contemporary Java. The second part, fortunately containing the bulk of the book, is the most valuable because of its descriptive account of the Subud movement. The first part, however, should have been abridged, whereas the third part more properly belonged in a specialist journal.

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PETER SCHALK (Editor-in-Chief), and MICHAEL STAUSBERG (Co-Editor), *"Being Religious and Living through the Eyes." Studies in Religious Iconography and Iconology. A Celebratory Publication in Honour of Professor Jan Bergman*, Faculty of Theology, Uppsala University, Published on the Occasion of his 65th Birthday, June 2, 1998 (Acta Universitatis

Upsaliensis. Historia Religionum, 14) — Uppsala 1998 (423 p.) ISBN 91-554-4199-8 (pbk.) SEK 293.

This rich volume contains 22 essays, collected in honour of Jan Bergman, the well known historian of religions from Uppsala, who passed away on the 27th of August, 1999. The previous year he had retired from his chair at Uppsala — the famous chair held by Nathan Söderblom and Geo Widengren. Jan Bergman was an expert on Egyptian and Hellenistic Religions (See his doctoral dissertation: *Ich bin Isis. Studien zum memphitischen Hintergrund der griechischen Isisaretalogien*, Uppsala 1968). His scholarly interests covered Christianity, Islam and Judaism as well. In his academic work, both in writing and teaching, he gave special attention to religious iconography. This wide area of interests is reflected in this collection of essays, written by colleagues from different countries and disciplines. A bibliography of Jan Bergman is included in this volume (p. 27-33).

The religions referred to in the 22 papers are Archaic Egyptian Religion, Buddhism, Christianity, Gnosticism, Hinduism, Islam, Judaism, North American Indian Religion, Old Norse Religion, Sulawesi Religion, Zoroastrianism. As the editor, Peter Schalk, indicates in the introduction, there is "no uniform use of the word 'iconography'" by the contributors. So the volume is of special interest for every scholar working in this field and reflecting on the meaning of this concept. Apart from the various case studies referring to one religious tradition, as e.g. "A Hajj Certificate from the Early 20th Century" (Jan Hjärpe, Lund), there are some comparative and general studies which deserve to be mentioned, as e.g. "Divine Visualisations. Mystical Techniques in Judaism and Tantric Buddhism" (Antoon Geels, Lund) and "Religious Architecture and Religious Experience" (Nils G. Holm, Åbo). Another interesting aspect of this volume is that it shows the interplay of different disciplines engaged in the scientific study of religion, as e.g. a New Testament scholar writing on Hellenistic and Jewish philosophy (Lars Hartman, Uppsala: "The Human Desire to converse with the Divine. Dio of Prusa and Philo of Alexandria on Images of God") and a historian of religions writing on a text from the New Testament, the legend of "the three kings" in the Gospel of Matthew (Anders Hultgard, Uppsala: "The Magi and the Star — the Persian Background in Texts and Iconography").

It is hardly imaginable that there is a scholar of religion who will not find in this volume at least one essay which is relevant and inspiring for his or her own work.

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JOHN F.A. SAWYER, *Sacred Languages and Sacred Texts* (Religion in the
   First Christian Centuries) — London/New York: Routledge 1999 (190
   p.) ISBN 0-415-12547-2 (pbk.) £16.99.

This book is a most welcome contribution to the aim of the series, which is
to survey particular themes in the history of religion across different religions
of (late) antiquity. That is especially needed when it comes to Jewish and
Christian traditions within the Graeco-Roman world which are often treated
as if they were religions of a different nature, somehow exempt from general
concepts of the history of religion or comparisons with "pagan" contemporary
traditions. One has only to consider how the use of such a basic concept as
"myth" is carefully avoided by almost all scholarly work when it comes to
the study of Jewish, Christian, or Muslim traditions.

Sacred Languages and Sacred Texts surveys such topics as the language
situation in the first centuries of the common era; the different sacred or quasi-
sacred languages such as Hebrew, but also Greek, Latin, Aramaic, Punic
and Avestan; litteracy; canonization; translation; beliefs and controls; names
and numbers; styles and strategies; and finally, interpretations. The book is
completed with a lenghty bibliography and a thematic index.

Since the contribution of this book is clearly aimed at a popular audience,
it is not expected to enter into scholarly debate. Nevertheless, a more prudent
stance would have been expected on such disputed issues as the "Qumran
community" and its "scriptorium" whose very existence is challenged by
not a few scholars nowadays, to say nothing about the relationship between
this hypothetical community and the Dead Sea scrolls ("the heretical Jewish
monastic community at Qumran had its own scriptorium where the bulk
of the Dead Sea Scrolls were copied, conspicuously outside the control of
Jerusalem," p. 86). A similar observation could be made about the acceptance
without discussion of the commonly — or once commonly — admitted view
about the historicity of the enigmatic figure of Ezra and of his religious reform
in the fifth century BCE (p. 51).

Finally, given the very topic of the book, it would have been of great interest to extend the period under consideration to the third century CE in order to take into account the birth and growth of Manichaeism; it would certainly have provided significant data in connection with sacred texts, sacred languages, canonization and translation.

Notwithstanding these minor reservations, this book is certainly a good example of a scholarly work much needed by those who seek to understand the manifold religious influences at work in the formation of western civilization. Written for a large readership, its content is accessible to any educated reader, while the more specialized ones will also find profit in the bringing together of matters generally set apart by the artificial delimitation of scholarly fields which have more to do with religious beliefs or confessional creeds than with scientific scrutiny.

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